

Proverbs 2:10-12,16

For wisdom will enter your heart  
And knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;  
Discretion will guard you,  
Understanding will watch over you,  
To deliver you from the way of evil,  
From the man who speaks perverse things;  
To deliver you from the strange woman,  
From the adulteress who flatters with her words;

As I've done before, I want to briefly cover the principles for reading Proverbs and the Philosophy of the Book of Proverbs, as I understand it.

Our principles for reading proverbs have to do with the nature of the book itself, and how it was intended to be read. Regarding this, there are three principles we must keep in our minds:

1. The book of Proverbs is wisdom, not law. It expects you to read between the lines and pick up what is being placed before you. While most books of scripture expect you to sit and be educated, Proverbs invites you to sit and ponder with it to search the depths of Wisdom and her sisters.
2. Secondly, keeping with the theme of conversation, proverbs is a book of indicatives, not imperatives. It is not giving you didactic teaching or even sermons, rather it gives indications on how things work. Proverbs cares much more about "what is" than anything else.
3. As with all of scripture, Christ is the point of Proverbs. All of scripture speaks about Christ, and when we read and study this book, we are learning about the ways of Christ just as much as when we read Romans or Exodus. This book is meant to direct us to Christ as our source and end of all wisdom.

As Christ is our Lord, this leads us to the Philosophy of Proverbs:

1. Fear the Lord, for this is where all wisdom and knowledge come from. Fear is recognition of and thankfulness to God for what He does and Who He is, followed by diligent obedience to His commands and instructions.
2. Seek wisdom in all that we do. We should understand God's law and be practical and prudent on how we exercise it.
3. Honor your parents. Embedded in the very structure of the book is the idea of heeding your father and mother in their advice and obeying that advice, often comparing your usage of their wisdom to jewelry and ornaments. This

mirrors the first element of this philosophy in that honoring your parents is a form of honoring God, and the kind of relationship you have with your father is similar to that which you have with God.

4. Teach your children. Finally, corresponding to the second element of this philosophy, you are to pass on what you learn to your children, to teach them to love the Lord your God and seek wisdom. Entailed in this element is the expectation that you will be wise enough to pass wisdom on and be honorable enough to cause your children to listen.

With these ideas in the back of our mind, let's trace our way through this first treatise to understand the context of what we are reading. After providing an introduction, the book of Proverbs gives us ten treatises given from a father to his son. It is as if we have been invited to sit and listen in as this father instructs his son in the ways of wisdom and the fear of the Lord. The father here is obeying the instruction of our Lord from Deuteronomy 6, where He tells fathers: **“You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up...you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. (Deuteronomy 6:7,3)”** The father in this book takes his duty to teach his sons seriously.

This connection reinforces the idea that our relationship to our father is like our relationship to God. This causes a certain overlap in how we treat both figures. In this specific context, the instruction of the father IS the instruction of God, and the son is to obey. This is true in both in a literary sense – that God Inspired this book so we may take it as His word – and the metaphysical sense – that the child is to accept the instruction of his parents as instructions from God. Additionally, the father here models his teaching style after God because God is the perfect Teacher, and because God is the fathers Father. The father handing down this teaching is because his father before him handed this wisdom to him, and because God is his ultimate father.

This causes two parallels within the Philosophy of Proverbs: the first point of this Philosophy of Proverbs, to fear the Lord, corresponds to the third, to Honor your Parents – and the second, to Seek Wisdom, corresponds to the fourth, to teach your children. The father was instructed to teach his sons, so he does, honoring both his earthly and Heavenly fathers. This is seeking wisdom, since it is an alignment with how wisdom seeks after us. The son is then called to mimic his father, passing on the wisdom given by his father to his own children, further repeating the cycle.

In this first treatise, the father is making a case for a love of wisdom, True Philosophy, by weighing the responses of Wisdom to those who accept her against her response to those who reject her. This begins with a simple question: Will you side with God or not? Are you on God's side or not? If you are, then Wisdom is not merely an added bonus or the cherry on the cake, but the very center and essence of your ability to Fear and Love God. To be Christian, in terms of the New Testament, is to Fear the Lord and Love Wisdom. To demonstrate this question, the father describes how wicked men will seek to entice the son into their ways to later contrast it with the father's instructions on how to seek after Wisdom.

The reasons for this are made clear throughout the treatise. To the wicked, Wisdom says, "Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me, because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would not accept my counsel; they spurned all my reproof. (1:28-30)" Additionally, the father says of the sons love of wisdom that, "If you seek [Wisdom] as silver And search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will discern the fear of the Lord And discover the knowledge of God. (2:4-5)" This means that Wisdom, in some sense, is equivalent to God, as a personification. To love Wisdom is to love God and to Love God is to Love Wisdom.

This question is then given practical consideration by way of example. The wicked act in a certain way, and the righteous act in another way. The father tasks himself with exposing the ways of the wicked for the trap that they are, and to instruct his son to follow the way of the righteous. He starts with the wicked men, detailing the ways in which they will entice the son to act in evil ways. They will first ask him to do a task, then they will want him in their company, and then they want him in their inner circle. This is signified by the language "Come with us", then "let us", then "throw in your lot with us". The wicked want the son to set a trap for the innocent, then join them in the destruction of the innocent, then to join in their brotherhood. While they start with a trap for others, the father is clear that they are actually setting a trap for themselves. In some way, they see the trap for what it is, and step into it anyway. As the father says, "Indeed, it is useless to spread the baited net in the sight of any bird; But they lie in wait for their own blood; They ambush their own lives. So are the ways of everyone who gains by violence; It takes away the life of its possessors. (1:17-19)" The first trap they set is for themselves, and they will be consumed by it. The second trap they set is for the innocent, to consume even them. The third trap they set is for the son, to make the son like themselves. If the son joins them in their evil, he will be trapped just as they are.

The father then tells his son of Wisdom's response to the wicked. Just as "He who sits in the heavens laughs, [and] will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury (Psalm 2:4a,5)" and "gave them over in the lusts of their hearts

to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them (Rom 1:24)” because the wicked “did not honor Him as God or give thanks (Rom 1:21)”, Wisdom “will also laugh at [their] calamity [and] mock when [their] dread comes. (1:26)” She says, “When your dread comes like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me, because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. (1:27-29)”

All this, even though “Wisdom shouts in the street, She lifts her voice in the square; At the head of the noisy streets she cries out; At the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings: “How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing and fools hate knowledge? Turn to my reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. (1:20-23)”, they saw Wisdom, heard her loud cries, acknowledged that she was there, heard her cries to be made into wiser men, and simply walked away. Like Cain, the wicked looked God in the His face and scoffed. Mockingly, they ask with Cain, “Am I my brother’s keeper? (Gen 4:9)” knowing full well, they are. As John says in his epistle, “this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother’s were righteous. (1 John 3:11)”

Wisdom’s call is for everyone. She places herself in the most conspicuous places, and the father wants the son to listen to her. As she went to the wicked, she is also going to the son. Unlike the way of the wicked, the way of righteousness is to run toward her, search for her, and cling to her. This starts with a recognition that the son does not already possess Wisdom. As Agur says, “Surely, I am more stupid than any man, and I do not have the understanding of a man. Neither have I learned wisdom, nor do I have the knowledge of the Holy One. (30:2-3)”, the father tells the son a little later, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. (3:5-6)” Because the son does not have Wisdom, it is his primary duty to search for her.

This is what the father tells his son to do. He says, “My son, if you will receive my words and treasure my commandments within you, make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding. (2:1-2)” He then sets out his argument. “For if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; If you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will discern the fear of the Lord And discover the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, Guarding the paths of justice, And He preserves the way of His godly ones. Then you will discern

righteousness and justice and equity and every good course. For wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; Discretion will guard you, Understanding will watch over you, (2:3-11)”

Rearranged, the argument is this: God is the Source of all Wisdom, knowledge and understanding, and He stores up the wisdom for those who are on His side. The father is to be on God’s side and set an example for his son and build a wealth of wisdom himself to set before the son to teach him, through example and instruction. If the son, like his father, seeks after wisdom, Wisdom will abide with him, causing him to discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God. This discernment will then lead to right action, which will, in turn, deliver him from evil. We see, again, that Wisdom and God are inseparable, and to have one is to have the other. Wisdom, then, functions in three ways:

1. Wisdom is the gateway to God. To truly understand the fear of the Lord, we must first seek after Wisdom by acknowledging our lack of it.
2. Wisdom is the path to understand God. By gaining wisdom and understanding, we begin to understand God as God so we may acknowledge Him.
3. And Wisdom is the stored treasure of God. By gaining Wisdom, we learn righteousness, which keeps us from evil.

Wisdom reaches out to each of us, is the way to understand the Fear of the Lord, and is the practical salvation from the ways of the wicked man and the harlot, but this arrangement requires an active participation on the part of the son in seeking Wisdom. What the father is teaching the son is that the wicked reject wisdom at some point, and it is that point of rejection that the father teaches the son to look out for and avoid. Remember what Wisdom is: Wisdom is a trained habit of action to a particular end. It is a skill that is learned, but it is also the end of skillfulness itself, and it is the understanding of the presentation of God within that skillfulness. When the son finds wisdom, and fears the Lord, and gains his bounty of wisdom, then he will have his paths guarded, his way preserved, and will gain all forms of discernment. And when he rejects wisdom, and does not fear the Lord, then both Wisdom and God will turn from him, allowing him to fall into the traps he should have seen because Wisdom has been telling him about them the entire time.

This active participation, a life of diligent searching for wisdom, is what the father is advocating for and is supposed to model, and the salvation that is promised is this: The son will be delivered “**from the way of evil,.. and the strange woman.** (2:12a,16a)” This deliverance is the keeping of the son from the WAYS of evil, not evil people. God does not promise that evil people will never harm you,

He promises that you will be like Him. By Loving Him, the result is that your very being is changed, so that you will think like Him, act like Him, and Talk like Him.

This is what we find in our Lord's prayer, when He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. I ask on their behalf;...for they are Yours; and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them...I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth... I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. (John 17:1b-10, 13-17, 20-23)" This prayer that Christ gave for us, is that we would be one with Him and the Father, first through knowledge and then through Love and then through Sanctification. What Christ is asking the Father to do is to make us Like Him.

Further, when Paul pens his account of the golden chain of redemption, he says, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Romans 8:28-30)" In this chain of salvation, our being "predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29b)" is what Christ meant regarding our being sanctified, and is what Proverbs intends to convey in this salvation promised to the son.

While Christ, Paul, and John focus on the Divine salvation, of which sanctification is a part, Proverbs is focused on our choices and actions that practically aid or hinder that sanctification. These are not opposing ideas, but the

same idea visited from two angles. The way the wicked men reject wisdom in their sinful hearts – stubbornly clinging to their sin – is what the son will be kept from as a result of Wisdom’s habitation within him, so long as the son actively seek after her. The father in proverbs says: “For wisdom will enter your heart And knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; Discretion will guard you, Understanding will watch over you, To deliver you from the way of evil, From the man who speaks perverse things; From those who leave the paths of uprightness To walk in the ways of darkness; Who delight in doing evil And rejoice in the perversity of evil; Whose paths are crooked, And who are devious in their ways; To deliver you from the strange woman, From the adulteress who flatters with her words; That leaves the companion of her youth And forgets the covenant of her God; For her house sinks down to death And her tracks lead to the dead; None who go to her return again, Nor do they reach the paths of life. (2:10-19)”

Here, the father represents this sinful attitude in two ways, one masculine and one feminine – or “the way of evil” and “the strange woman”. Within these two characterizations, we see further details. By being delivered from the way of evil, the son is delivered from speaking perverse things, leaving the path of uprightness, walking in the ways of darkness, delighting in doing evil, rejoicing in perversity, walking on crooked paths, and being devious. By being delivered from the strange woman, the son is delivered from being a flatterer, leaving the companion of his youth, forgetting the covenant with his God, sinking his home to the dead, death itself, and leaving the paths of life. This degeneration starts with the masculine joy in depravity and wickedness, and leads to the feminine abandonment of loyalty and covenant, ultimately resulting in the son being no longer being held by any principle or allegiance.

These details are worth delving into of themselves, but the focus of my point here today is to show the totality of this salvation as presented by the father in this first treatise. The salvation here is delivered to the son, not by some miraculous gift of God from nowhere but through the son’s natural father as the main source of this blessing, which is then reinforced through the scriptures and the effectiveness of the father’s witness and teaching. This is not because God can’t miraculously give Wisdom, it is because He chooses to use the father’s teaching and example as the instrument to deliver wisdom to the son. The father, by diligently seeking Wisdom as a bounty, then actively seeks his own son, just as wisdom first sought him just as she does every man, to transmit what Wisdom has been given to him to his own offspring. In this, the father begins by loving God with all his being which results in loving his nearest neighbor as himself. From his example, the son then learns to search for wisdom from his father, not simply through his formal teaching but through his practiced habits of action. From this tangible guidebook – that is his father’s skills, wisdom, and vocation – the son then has a model most closely resembling himself to act in accordance with to

achieve a measure of success in finding wisdom. But this model alone will not suffice.

The son can copy the ways of his father yet still fail to grasp wisdom herself. He can learn the superficial modes of being and habits of action, while still failing to have true communion with that kind of skill that perceives the Fear of the Lord and the Wisdom of God. The son cannot simply model his father, he must have a true interest in and love for Wisdom in his own heart for the teachings to bear fruit. He is expected to contemplate the ways in which he may fall and guard his heart against those ways by creating habits of action in himself. To instill this love for wisdom is to not only emulate his father, but to also emulate Christ, because Christ is the source of all Wisdom, and to seek to be like Wisdom is to seek to be like Christ. So, the father builds this current narrative with the intent of demonstrating to the son, at the beginning of all his teaching, what will happen to the son should he seek the mere semblance of Wisdom while rejecting Her Substance. The father, while being the focal instrument for Wisdom's reach to his son, cannot be its fulfillment. It is here that the Pharisees and Sadducees failed this test.

To inaugurate his coming, Christ sent the Prophet in the spirit of Elijah first to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children. While seeking to be like their fathers in all the wrong ways, the Pharisees and Sadducees failed to use their father's examples - namely Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - as a means to access Wisdom, and through Her, Christ. They sought the law that their fathers taught, and whatever technical obedience to it they could accomplish, above the intent of the law that was given. This was a failure of the fathers throughout the generations that Christ intended to remedy by returning this relationship back into the fore. The Father's job is not to make a mere copy of himself, being merely technically proficient at any given trade. As I said in my sermon last month, the goal of any given craftsman is to hone their craft, have clear defined goals, to have the proper tools required for the job, and to have the skill in applying all these things to achieve the goal that had been set. The father craft is his life, his goal is to pass on to his children the Fear of the Lord, his tools by which he achieves this end is the lesser wisdoms he gains throughout his life - such as his ability to create, to fix, to deal, or to contemplate - and his skill is how he weaves the narratives of these treatises to effectively convey the Truth he has grasped. His job is the same as Christ's - to show God to those who see him. This goal flows from the commands **"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:14-16)"** and **"you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)"**



The transmission of righteousness, then, flows from father to son by way of example and explicit teaching, to provide a model to follow and the required insight into the intent and desires needed to have access to Wisdom. This is the holistic plan that God has set for us, given to us, and expects us to follow. The path to righteousness, according to Proverbs, is not one of grand sacrifices or events. It is not the fantastical life full of emotional sways and dramatic shifts. It is one of stable, plodding steps toward an equilibrium of and unity with the way that God has made the world to operate precisely because God has made Himself known through the world. It is through this path that the son will be saved from the way of the wicked. It isn't about you having an emotional conversion moment in your life, it's about the steady and increasingly sure steps of a man in search of treasure, who, after years of practiced skill, learns the right way to apply the law given to act appropriately at any given moment. It's about moments of quiet humility, and moments of teaching that slowly change what you are, and what your children are, into beings that diligently seek, by habit of action, for wisdom and the Fear of the Lord.

So, then, it is wisdom to know that you do not have wisdom, and it is wisdom that provides the path towards gaining wisdom. And it is Wisdom to learn the sayings and ways of your fathers, and to pass those ways onto your children. Wisdom is also the insight we gain, through years of honing that skill of Philosophy, to avoid the trap set by our enemies. Wisdom is also that insight you gain, teaching you to Fear the Lord in a new way. To learn to acknowledge His Craftsmanship in creating the grass, or the stars, or the human body, or the human mind, or the way in which your engine works, or the way the laws of logic function.

Wisdom then, by dwelling in your heart, becomes the insight required to learn how to Fear the Lord, and is the fullness of that Fear made manifest through the habituated action of a skilled man in the Law of God that keeps his feet from evil. With this freedom from the ways of evil comes all forms of blessing. Instead of falling into the obvious traps set by wicked men, we avoid them, giving us life, and health, and peace. This is why we can say with Psalmist, **“I will walk at liberty, For I seek Your precepts. I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings and shall not be ashamed. I shall delight in Your commandments, Which I love. And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments, Which I love; And I will meditate on Your statutes. (Psalm 119:45-48)”** **“This is my comfort in my affliction, That Your word has revived me. (Psalm 119:50)”** **“Your statutes are my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. O Lord, I remember Your name in the night and keep Your law. This has become mine, That I observe Your precepts. (Psalm 119:54-56)”**

All of this, “So you will walk in the way of good men and keep to the paths of the righteous. For the upright will live in the land and the blameless will remain in it; But the wicked will be cut off from the land and the treacherous will be uprooted from it. (Proverbs 2:20-22)”

Amen.