

Unit I. Wisdom in Proverbs

Wisdom's Rewards

DEVOTIONAL READING: Job 28:12-28
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Job 1; 42; Proverbs 8
PRINT PASSAGE: Proverbs 8:8-14, 17-21

Key Verses—Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. (Proverbs 8:10-11, KJV)

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“Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.” (Proverbs 8:10-11, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Recognize the incomparable value of godly wisdom in producing wealth, righteousness, and justice.
- Appreciate the difference between Wisdom's rewards and those of mere wealth.
- Analyze your life's pursuit to ensure that godly wisdom, with its attendant rewards, is in view and is not some cheap substitute.

*Key Terms

Arrogance (verse 13)—Hebrew: *ga'own* (gaw-ohn'): "arrogancy" (KJV); exaltation; pride.

Crooked (verse 8)—Hebrew: *pathal* (paw-thal'): twisted; cunning; "froward" (KJV).

Instruction (verse 10)—Hebrew: *musar* (moo-sawr'): discipline; chastening; correction.

Pride (verse 13)—Hebrew: *geah* (gay-aw'): arrogance.

Prudence (verse 12)—Hebrew: *ormah* (or-maw'): craftiness; cautiousness.

Right (verse 9)—Hebrew: *yashar* (yaw-shawr'): straight; right; upright.

Words (verse 8)—Hebrew: *emer* (ay'-mer): speech; utterances; sayings.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

Introduction

Isn't it amazing how excited everyone gets when the national lottery prizes reach multi-millions of or even a billion dollars? It is easy to understand why people go crazy buying



The Biblical Context

In Proverbs 8, Solomon once again personified wisdom as a woman. Solomon pictured Wisdom as a caring mother calling out to her children not to turn from their healthy reverence for God. This reverence for God or fear of God is more than just having respect for God and who He is. It is much more. Reverencing, or fearing, God means that we completely submit our lives to Him. We obey His commands wholeheartedly. We worship and praise His name in awe of His omnipotent power and presence. Solomon began Proverbs describing Wisdom's call in verses 1-11. He then spoke of the rewards of heeding Wisdom's call in verses 12-21. To ensure that his listeners recognized wisdom worthy of our attention, Solomon described Wisdom's role in the creation of the world and universe (see verses 22-31). Finally, after making his pitch throughout the chapter, Solomon closed in verses 32-36 with another call to heed Wisdom's call.

tickets when the prize levels get so high. Everyone dreams of being the nation's next millionaire. At the very essence of lottery fever is greed, the desire to obtain massive levels of riches. We have heard the stories of people who actually ended up worse off after winning the lottery.

The Penny Hoarder Web site (<https://www.thepennyhoarder.com/smart-money/lottery-winners-who-lost-it-all>) offered the following cautionary tale about one winner of a massive lottery prize:

Jack Whittaker was already a millionaire when, on Christmas of 2002, he won \$314.9 million, the biggest single-person lottery win in history. He opted for a lump-sum payment, which after taxes, left him with \$93 million. His contracting business, which employed over 100 people, provided a great living, but his humble lifestyle meant few people knew how much he made. The lottery winnings were apparently a different kind of income.

Whittaker spent money at strip clubs and casinos. He gave millions to charities. His habit of

leaving cash in his car resulted in thefts of \$545,000 one time and \$100,000 another, and his house was robbed. He showered gifts and cash on his beloved 16-year-old granddaughter, who spent much of the money on drugs. A year later, she was found, apparently murdered.

Whittaker rarely speaks to the press now, and some reports say he is broke. When asked if life was easier before his big win, he said, "Yeah, it was a lot easier then."

Mr. Whittaker's supposed "reward" of winning the lottery ended up being a severe punishment.

A moral of this story can be summed up in these words: *Lord, give me wisdom to appreciate and handle what I already have!*

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Wisdom Is Most Precious (Proverbs 8:8-11)

KJV

8 All the *words* of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing *froward* or perverse in them.

9 They are all plain to him that understandeth, and *right* to them that find knowledge.
10 Receive my *instruction*, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold.
11 For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

NIV

8 “All the *words* of my mouth are just; none of them is *crooked* or perverse.
9 “To the discerning all of them are *right*; they are upright to those who have found knowledge.
10 “Choose my *instruction* instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold,
11 “for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.”

Solomon opened chapter 8 by describing Wisdom’s call in verses 1-5. Wisdom was not hiding in some obscure place. She was ever present where people congregated (see verse 2). She was especially interested in the “simple” and “foolish” (see verse 5). What was her message? Solomon provided a description in verses 6-11. The message was worthy of those listening to hear (see verse 6). The words were truly counter to any wickedness (see **verse 8**). Since the city streets of the ancient Near East were filled with cunning salespeople, Solomon wanted to put his listeners at ease. He was not selling some “snake oil” potion. While the slick hucksters in the streets of the cities sought to deceive those Solomon was addressing, Wisdom was totally honest with no hidden agenda. Ironically, because God’s message is so simple, some people discount it as worthless as compared to the complicated reasoning of wickedness (see 1 Corinthians 1:18-25).

Since Solomon’s attention was to the person who had answered Wisdom’s call, Solomon affirmed to his listeners that those who have received God’s wisdom have found righteous insights into living lives that please God (**verse 9**). Indirectly, Solomon was making it clear that God’s wisdom would not make any sense at all to the wicked. Since the world in his day and still today placed great value on material possessions, Solomon emphasized the priority of seeking God’s wisdom over riches (**verse 9**). Riches are temporary, but God’s wisdom is eternal. That is why Solomon emphasized that, no matter the amount of riches, their value was worthless compared to the value of God’s wisdom (**verses 10-11**).

 **What Do You Think?** How are wisdom and the fear of the Lord connected?

Fear the Lord, Hate Evil! (Proverbs 8:12-14)

KJV

12 I wisdom dwell with *prudence*, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.
13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: *pride*, and *arrogancy*, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.
14 Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength.

NIV

12 “I, *wisdom*, dwell together with *prudence*; I possess knowledge and discretion.

13 “To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate *pride* and *arrogance*, evil behavior and perverse speech.

14 “Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have insight, I have power.”

In **verse 12**, Solomon expanded upon his reference in verse 5 to the simple’s receiving prudence. Those that lacked common sense really needed to heed the call of Wisdom. My godfather, Deacon Herbert H. Brown, was quick to remind us in various settings, “Common sense ain’t that common.” That was why Solomon took time to discuss the connection between God’s wisdom and common sense. Since he was also sharing about God to some people who might not be that faithful in their belief or did not believe in God at all, his references to the ability to gain common sense—discernment about the world at-large—made sense.

Not to move too far from his call for those listening to accept God’s wisdom, Solomon reminded them what it meant to reverence God in **verse 13**. Reverencing God had to be more than words. It meant hating evil and its associated evil behavior (**verse 13**). Solomon gave three examples of evil behavior: pride, arrogance, and perverse speech (**verse 13**). Pride referred to those thinking that they were more than God. Arrogance referred to those thinking that they were more than others. Perverse speech was outward confirmation of an evil heart. In contrast to all this negativity, God’s wisdom offered His “counsel and sound judgment” (**verse 14**). In Solomon’s day, the Law provided the framework by which those that loved the Lord could lead right lives. In the age of grace, the Holy Spirit is our daily guide to living a righteous life. God’s wisdom, if accepted, would give a person discernment between good and evil and the power to overcome Satan’s temptations (**verse 14**). As a warning to those who took stock in the power of human rulers, Solomon reminded his listeners that each of these rulers was under God’s authority.

 **What Do You Think?** Given the blessings of God’s wisdom, why do you think so many people prefer to rely on their own understanding?

Walk in Righteousness (*Proverbs 8:17-21*)

KJV

17 I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.

18 Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness.

19 My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver.

20 I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment:

21 That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.

NIV

17 “I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me.

18 “With me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity.

19 “My fruit is better than fine gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver.

20 “I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice,

21 “bestowing a rich inheritance on those who love me and making their treasuries full.”

The casual reader might misunderstand **verse 17**. Since wisdom is associated with God, Solomon was not saying that God did not love everyone—even those who did not receive His wisdom. Instead, Solomon was emphasizing the benefits that awaited those who accepted God’s wisdom. Receiving God’s wisdom is an act of mutual reciprocal love. God loves all of His creation. God shares the fullness of His love with those that accept His wisdom. Why? It’s simple: God’s *agape* love is independent of whether or not we love Him. So when we love Him back, that is a sweet savor, our love offering to God. God’s wisdom is not hard to find at all. When we accept God, we receive His wisdom too. That was at the heart of Solomon’s teaching in Proverbs 8. Those that continued to worship idol gods or simply relied upon their “own devices” were foolish without question.

Solomon made it clear to his listeners that accepting God’s wisdom had its benefits. The first benefit is riches (**verse 18**). Riches? Yes, God’s wisdom leads to riches. The best way to understand what is meant by “riches” here is through a story from my days in my microeconomics class. One of our assignments was to show which was easier to get to a million dollars: play the lottery weekly, or save the amount of the cost of the lottery ticket. When we completed the calculations, it was easier to save to get to the million dollars. God’s wisdom will guide us to be prudent when it comes to our finances. Unfortunately, Solomon allowed the temptation of his many wives and concubines to cloud his thinking. Even though he continued to reap the benefits of God’s material blessings, still, his mistake in judgment eventually led to the split of his kingdom (see 1 Kings 12).

While people will lift us up one minute then tear us down before that minute is over, God gives us a place of honor (**verse 18**). That is the second benefit. God’s honor is not based upon human standards of being served but on His standards of being a servant. As we walk with the Lord, we will see evidence (“fruit,” **verse 19**) of His wisdom in our lives. For the farmer, a bountiful crop is worth much. Likewise, our bountiful “crop” in God’s wisdom is indeed valuable, worth more than “fine gold” or “choice silver” (**verse 19**). Solomon concluded the “rewards section” of Proverbs 8 (verses 12-21) in **verses 20-21**. Accepting God’s wisdom is to begin a journey along the path of righteousness (**verse 20**) and life’s true riches (**verse 21**; see Matthew 16:26).

 **What Do You Think?** What are some ways or circumstances in which wisdom is more valuable than money?

A Closing Thought


People desire wisdom and hope to be rewarded when they search for it. Why is wisdom so desirable? Wisdom's value is more than tangible gain; it gives knowledge and courage and leads toward God's path of justice and righteousness.

Your Life

After studying today's lesson, you might be taking inventory of your walk with the Lord. You might be pleased, disappointed, or a little bit of both. Just as most of us pay our auto loans one payment at a time, wisdom must always be purchased on the installment plan too. When we seek wisdom, we will find some measure of material security in life even if it's the calm assurance internally from God's Holy Spirit. In contrast, if we seek wealth before wisdom, we will never have that inner peace.

Your World!

Despite what the world presents, the road to justice is paved by God's infinite wisdom, not by our own finite intelligence. When we face the ridicule of the world for our trust in Him, we discover courage in God's wisdom. She never directs us along the wrong path. We just have to trust in faith no matter what, even when the reality of the situation calls for doubt.

 **Closing Prayer** Almighty God, we thank You for the presence of Your wisdom in our lives. We ask for Your Holy Spirit's guidance that we might heed Wisdom's direction daily. Help us to have unfailing trust in You, no matter the circumstances. It is in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

In preparation for next week's lesson, you should take time to contrast the wine of wisdom personified as a woman (see Proverbs 9:5) with the wine of Babylon personified as a woman in Revelation 14:8. Read Proverbs 9:1-6, 8-10, 13-18.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY , June 22	"Law Provides the Edge"	(Psalm 119:97-104)
TUESDAY , June 23	"Wise and Foolish Bridesmaids"	(Matthew 25:1-13)
WEDNESDAY , June 24	"Church Proclaims the Wisdom of God"	(Ephesians 3:7-13)
THURSDAY , June 25	"No Wise Person among You?"	(1 Corinthians 6:1-6)
FRIDAY , June 26	"Wise and Foolish Builders"	(Matthew 7:24-27)
SATURDAY , June 27	"The Benefits of Making the Wise Choice"	(Psalm 1)
SUNDAY , June 28	"Wisdom Delivers Many Benefits"	(Proverbs 9:1-6, 8-10, 13-18)