

Wisdom from the Proverbs

The Foundation of Wisdom—The fear of the Lord

Introduction: In our daily Bible readings, we've been reading for a few days from the book of Proverbs and will continue to do so for a couple of weeks. Proverbs offers practical advice about how to apply godly principles to life's circumstances. It offers good advice or counsel about life's relationships and responsibilities. The goal of this collection is clearly made known in the first paragraph:

*To know wisdom and instruction,
To discern the sayings of understanding,
To receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and equity;
To give prudence to the naive, to the youth knowledge and discretion.*

Surely everyone wants to be considered wise; but often people live in folly. How can we attain the wisdom that results in proper and prosperous living?

The Fear of God—the foundation of all wisdom.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 1:7).

By “the Lord” Solomon does not mean just any deity. The expression is the common one for the God of Israel. Though there are many deities, it is the God of the Bible that this proverb concerns.

The “fear” of the Lord refers to the respect and yes, even trepidation that comes from the acknowledgement of God's being and character. Solomon affirms that acknowledging God is not enough; he must be respected for who He is.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of “wisdom”. Wisdom is in this literature not so much about intellect as attitude. It is that understanding of God's nature and God's law that results in its proper application to all parts of life. Wisdom is the skill to apply the knowledge of truth to life's circumstances.

The fear of the Lord is the “beginning” of wisdom. Solomon is saying that the fear of the Lord is the “first and controlling principle, rather than a stage which one leaves behind” (Kidner). The idea is not, “I'll start with God and then I'll be headed in the right direction to follow my own wisdom”; but instead, “I'll start with respect for God and never stop respecting Him , so that I'll attain the wisdom He gives!”

But why should we fear Him?

We should fear Him because of who and what He is!

The verses in Proverbs about God establish the basis for this godly reverence for Him. We should fear because:

He made everything

The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens. (Prov. 3:19)

He has a plan for this world that cannot be overruled by man.

The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil. (Prov. 16:4)

There is no wisdom and no understanding and no counsel against the LORD. (Prov. 21:30)

Many are the plans in a man's heart, but the counsel of the LORD, it will stand. (Prov. 19:21)

He sees what we do

The eyes of the LORD are in every place, watching the evil and the good. (Prov. 15:3)

He can discern our character

The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests hearts. (Prov. 17:3)

Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD, how much more the hearts of men! (Prov. 15:11)

He can hear and answer our prayers

The LORD is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous. (Prov. 15:29)

He can provide our needs

The LORD will not allow the righteous to hunger, but He will thrust aside the craving of the wicked. (Prov. 10:3)

He can overturn our plans for good or evil

The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps. (Prov. 16:9)

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD. (Prov. 16:33)

He will judge the righteousness of our deeds.

Every man's way is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts. (Prov. 21:2)

The LORD will tear down the house of the proud, but He will establish the boundary of the widow. (Prov. 15:25)

We should fear Him because of the blessings it brings!

Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and turmoil with it. (Prov. 15:16)

Then you will discern the fear of the Lord, and discover the knowledge of God. (Prov. 2:5)

By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord one keeps away from evil. (Prov. 16:6)

The fear of the Lord leads to life, so that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil. (Prov. 19:23)

The fear of the Lord prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be shortened. (Prov. 10:27)

In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and his children will have refuge. (Prov. 14:26)

Conclusion: So you want to be wise? You want to know what will help you live life well? To be blessed by the creator?

Do not let your heart envy sinners, but live in the fear of the Lord always (Prov. 23:17).