

Pursuing Wisdom
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Proverbs 8:6-21

We live in a society that demands “instant everything.” It really began with our parents’ and grandparents’ generations in the last century as “instant” food products exploded in the marketplace: instant coffee, instant soup, instant oatmeal, instant pudding, etc. The microwave became a necessity and now the rage is the Instant Pot, which is simply grandma’s pressure cooker on steroids. Speaking of steroids, we also expect instant cures delivered by miracle drugs.

Everyone is looking for solutions to all their problems in five easy steps. *“Do these five things and your problems will be solved.”* There’s nothing wrong with communicating with simplified and summarized action steps. The problem is we all expect to do the five easy steps one time with immediate results. Some people also expect “instant wisdom” to live a successful life. Even followers of Christ are prone to think if we’ll just pray James 1:5, God will download wisdom directly into our consciousness with no further effort on our parts.

God does indeed invite us to ask for His wisdom, but His word says we have to do the work of pursuing it. As far as I know no one has discovered the “instant gold mine.” The gold is there but you have to dig for it. Proverbs 8 tells us that God’s wisdom (better than gold) is available to those “who search” for it.

Big Idea: God promises to provide His wisdom to those who ask Him for it, but living with godly wisdom is a day-by-day adventure of seeking and obeying His perspective through His Word, His Holy Spirit, and the wisdom of godly people.

In Proverbs 8, Solomon introduces us to an elegant lady named Wisdom. He taught his son (and us) that embracing this wonderful woman named Wisdom will result in everything we need to find “life and receive favor from the Lord.”

Proverbs 8:1–2 (NLT) — 1 Listen as Wisdom calls out! Hear as understanding raises her voice! **2** On the hilltop along the road, she takes her stand at the crossroads.

In the verses that follow, “Lady Wisdom” tells us of the benefits she offers. This week I’m using the New Living Translation for easier reading.

Proverbs 8:6–21 (NLT) — 6 Listen to me! For I have important things to tell you. Everything I say is right, **7** for I speak the truth and detest every kind of deception. **8** My advice is wholesome. There is nothing devious or crooked in it. **9** My words are plain to anyone with understanding, clear to those with knowledge. **10** Choose my instruction rather than silver, and knowledge rather than pure gold. **11** For wisdom is far more valuable than rubies. Nothing you desire can compare with it. **12** “I, Wisdom, live together with good judgment. I know where to discover knowledge and discernment. **13** All who fear the LORD will hate evil. Therefore, I hate pride and arrogance, corruption and perverse speech. **14** Common sense and success belong to me. Insight and strength are mine. **15** Because of me, kings reign, and rulers make just decrees. **16** Rulers lead with my help, and nobles make righteous judgments. **17** “I love all who love me. Those who search will surely find me. **18** I have riches and honor, as well as enduring wealth and justice. **19** My gifts are better than gold, even the purest gold, my wages better than sterling silver! **20** I walk in righteousness, in paths of justice. **21** Those who love me inherit wealth. I will fill their treasuries.

- Solomon chose to use the literary device of “personification” to teach his son about wisdom. Personification attaches “human characteristics, such as emotions and behaviors, to non-human things, animals, and ideas.”ⁱ
- Writers have used personification to “to make literature and poetry more vivid.”ⁱⁱ If I can picture this beautiful woman I can better grasp the concept that she is calling out from a busy street corner offering ultimate wisdom.
- In chapter nine Solomon actually contrasts two women: wisdom and folly.
- Embracing this personification, just imagine life with a wise counselor that could provide the kind of guidance Lady Wisdom has just promised!

- She has important (“noble”) things to say. (v.6) No frivolous info here.
- Everything she tells you is “right” (literally “straight.”) She speaks truth and is never devious. She will not manipulate or deceive you. (vv.7-8)
- Her words are “plain” to anyone who is teachable and open to them (v.9)
- Lady Wisdom’s instruction is worth more than gold, silver, or rubies. In other words, godly wisdom is PRICELESS.
- What’s a good definition of PRICELESS? Try this one, something that is so valuable you would pay any price or give up all the material wealth you have to obtain it. We’ve all been in some situation that was so severe we would gladly drain our bank account for a solution. That’s PRICELESS.
- Lady Wisdom offers “good judgment.”
- She knows where to find “knowledge and discernment.” “Common sense and success” belong to her.
- That’s a picture of someone you would trust with keys to your house, the password for your bank account, and the care of your family.
- Lady Wisdom also hates some things: evil, pride, arrogance, corruption, and perverse speech. She hates what God hates and so should we!
- She says, “All who fear the Lord” will hate those things. This is a key point we don’t want to miss. Look at the next chapter at Proverbs 9:10: **Proverbs 9:10 (NLT) — 10** Fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment.
- As we’ve said before, ultimate wisdom comes from God and that begins with a healthy reverence for Him and knowledge about Him. Living wisely comes from living biblically and obediently.
- In verses 15 and 16, Lady Wisdom says wise rulers have her as their chief advisor.
- Everyone is trying to find the solutions to all the problems of government across the globe. Just reach out to Lady Wisdom! Imagine what our nation would be like with leaders who DAILY sought godly wisdom before making policy. I realize we DO have some like that but we need MORE like that.

- While we're on the subject of all the challenges in our society, may I climb up on a "soapbox" for a moment? When I consider this description of godly wisdom and the noble, righteous, honest truth available to God's people, I can't help but contrast it with the ridiculous stuff I see people posting on social media. I shake my head at these "cut and paste" philosophers who have all the answers to COVID-19, race relations, and politics but probably haven't read or thought about anything in the last five years unless it was posted on Facebook and haven't cracked a book since graduation. To those uninformed experts I would share that famous quotation: *"Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and to remove all doubt."* (Was that Lincoln? Mark Twain? Who knows?)
- Thankfully, I haven't seen that kind of posting from any of this Bible Study group but sadly I do see it from people who profess to be Christians.
- Okay, off the soapbox and back to Solomon's teaching.
- Verses 18-21 are all about the "riches" one can obtain with godly wisdom: "riches and honor...enduring wealth and justice...gifts...better than gold, ...Those who love me inherit wealth. I will fill their treasuries."
- These verses are ripe to be twisted by prosperity gospel preachers. Sincere students of scripture know that godly wisdom will always result in "spiritual prosperity" and often financial blessings as well. One thing is for certain, those who live with godly wisdom will enjoy riches and abundance, if not in this life then certainly in the next life and for eternity.
- As we wind down this study, I want to really focus on verse seventeen: **Proverbs 8:17 (ESV) — 17** I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.
- Before we unpack that verse, don't those words of Lady Wisdom sound familiar?

In Jeremiah 29:13 (ESV) — God told His people, 13 You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

John 14:23 (ESV) — Jesus Himself said, 23 "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."

- Lady Wisdom’s words sound like the words of Christ because only those who have followed Him as Savior and Lord can obtain godly wisdom.
- Lady Wisdom says she will love those who love her.
- How do we “love” Lady Wisdom? For one thing, I don’t love Lady Folly (Prov. 9:13-18.) To receive the blessings Lady Wisdom offers, I have to be monogamous with her. Simply, every day I should desire godly wisdom.
- Just refer back to verses 10 and 11. If godly wisdom is worth more than gold, silver, and rubies, then I should LOVE and DESIRE it every day.
- When I get up in the morning and beg God to let me possess His wisdom that day, I’ll know I’m truly IN LOVE with Lady Wisdom.
- How can we become wise? Those who diligently seek wisdom will find it.
- Back to our “instant” generation. No one wants to diligently seek for anything. We don’t want to “break a sweat” or “break a nail.” We expect the good things in life to be delivered tomorrow by Amazon Prime!
- Godly wisdom does not come without diligent, daily pursuit.
- Let me give you an extreme example of seeking something diligently.
- We’ve all heard about the Audubon Society but do you know about its namesake John Audubon? Commentator Max Anders shares that this naturalist and artist *“considered no personal sacrifice too great to learn about birds and to record that information for posterity. He would go into the swamps night after night to record observations about nighthawks. One summer Audubon repeatedly visited the bayous near New Orleans to observe a shy waterbird. He would stand neck deep in the stagnant waters, scarcely breathing, while poisonous water moccasins swam past his face. It was a great hardship, but he reported with enthusiasm that the pictures of the birds that he was able to paint as a result made it all worthwhile. [Anders goes on to observe] If a person could be so disciplined for an earthly goal, how much more should a child of God be willing to sacrifice for following Christ.”* ⁱⁱⁱ

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Godly wisdom does not come without diligent, daily pursuit.
- We can't just pray James 1:5 and wander around waiting for God to download divine wisdom into our brains. Godly wisdom is more valuable than gold, silver, or rubies but, like those things, we have to DIG for it.
- We do that by DAILY seeking God's perspective through His Word, His Holy Spirit (living in us,) and the wisdom of godly people.
- Daily, I should be asking God: *"Lord, show me what you would have me to do in the situations I will face today and give me the strength to do it."*
- We should also ask: *"Lord, would you also reveal to me your wisdom about the areas of my life where I don't even realize I need help?"*
- When it comes to "mining" His Word, we need to study it for ourselves and listen to great sermons. As we seek wisdom for specific problems or challenges, we now have instant access to scripture on any topic via an app on our phones. [Just make sure it's not taken out of context!]
- We also need to have a devotional life that allows God to "hand us" a passage of scripture He wants us to ponder and obey. Whether it's Oswald Chambers' My Utmost or some other devotional work, if it's focused on a passage of scripture, God can and will use it to teach us godly wisdom.
- This week let's all be reminded that living with godly wisdom is a day-by-day adventure of seeking and obeying God's perspective on all of life. If we will diligently seek it, we will find it!

ⁱ <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/writing-101-what-is-personification-learn->

ⁱⁱ *ibid*

ⁱⁱⁱ Anders, Max. Holman Old Testament Commentary - Proverbs: 13 . B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.