

desiringGod

GET WISDOM – PART TWO

by John Piper Scripture: Proverbs 4:1–13

How Can We Get Wisdom?

Now finally I want to mention five biblical instructions for *how* to get this wisdom. **First, desire wisdom with all your might.** Proverbs 4:8 says, "Prize her highly and she will exalt you; she will honor you for your embrace." These are not cheap words. To *prize* something and to embrace someone are signs of intense desire and love. Wisdom must *be valuable* for us. We must be willing to sell all in order to buy it: "Seek it like silver, and search for it as for hidden treasure" (Proverbs 2:4). Blessed is the graduate who walks through the commencement line more hungry for wisdom than when he entered school, for he shall be satisfied.

Second, since wisdom is found in the Word of God, we must apply ourselves in **study and meditation to know the Word and do it.** "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, *making wise the simple.*" (Psalm 19:7). Therefore, we must devote ourselves to know and understand the testimonies of the Lord. And here I commend not only faithful Bible study, but also regular reading of great books on theology and biblical interpretation, books that distill the wisdom of the greatest students of the word over the past 1900 years.

Now, I know what you are thinking: I don't have the time or the ability to get anywhere in books like that. So I want to show you something really encouraging. When this was shown to me about four years ago by my pastor, it changed my life. Most of us don't aspire very high in our reading because we don't feel like there is any hope. But listen to this. Suppose you read about 250 words a minute and that you resolve to devote just 15 minutes a day to serious theological reading to deepen your grasp of biblical truth. In one year (365 days) you would read for 5,475 minutes. Multiply that times 250 words per minute and you get 1,368,750 words per year. Now most books have between 300 and 400 words per page. So if we take 350 words per page and divide that into 1,368,750 words per year, we get

3,910 pages per year. This means that at 250 words a minute, 15 minutes a day, you could read about 20 average sized books a year!

When I heard that, I went home, analyzed my day, and set aside the 15 minutes just before supper to read Jonathan Edwards' big book, *Original Sin*. And I did it in a couple of months. Then I turned to something else. I was absolutely elated: reading that I thought never could get done was now getting done in a 15 minute slot that would have been wasted anyway. Therefore, I encourage you, there is hope. Choose some classics that you've always wanted to read (St. Augustine's *Confessions*, or *City of God*; John Calvin's *Institutes*; Martin Luther's *Commentary on Galatians*, or *Bondage of the Will*; John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*; Jonathan Edwards' *Religious Affections*; etc.), and set aside 15 minutes, maybe just before you go to sleep, to read. You will not be the same person next year at this time. Your mind will be stretched, your heart enlarged, your zeal more fervent. Above all, you will have grown in *wisdom*. And it may not be long until someone says of you: "The words of his mouth are as deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a gushing spring" (Proverbs 18:4).

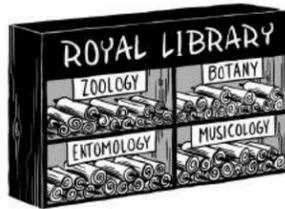
The **third** thing we should do to get wisdom is **pray**. Solomon was not born a wise man. He prayed for wisdom and God said, "Because you have asked this and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, behold now I do according to your word" (1 Kings 3:11). And Daniel admitted that in himself he had no wisdom (Daniel 2:30), but he said, "To thee, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for thou hast given me wisdom and strength, and hast made known to me what we asked of thee" (2:23). And we have seen how Paul prayed that the churches might be given "spiritual wisdom" (Colossians 1:9) and that they might have "a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of God" (Ephesians 1:17). And finally, James puts it as clearly as we could wish: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God" (James 1:5). The wisdom that leads to true and lasting happiness is not natural or inborn. It is supernatural. It is a gift of God. Therefore, if we would "get wisdom," we must pray.

The **fourth** biblical instruction for how to get wisdom is to **think frequently of your death**. Or to put it another way, think of the shortness of this life and the infinite length of the next. Psalm 90:12 says, "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." There is scarcely any thought that will purge our priorities of vain and worldly perceptions like the thought of our imminent death. O how cleansing it is to ponder the kind of life we would like to look back on

when we come to die. There is great wisdom in such meditation. Therefore, think often of your dying.

Finally, there is one last, absolutely essential thing to do if you would "get wisdom": **you must come to Jesus**. He said to the people of his day, "The queen of the south will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold something greater than Solomon is here" (Matthew 12:42). What an understatement. Greater than Solomon indeed! Solomon spoke God's wisdom. Jesus *is* the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24, 30). Others had spoken truth; he *is* the truth. Others had pointed the way to life; he *is* the way and the life (John 14:6). Others had given promises, but "all the promises of God find their yes in him" (2 Corinthians 1:20). Others had offered God's forgiveness; Jesus bought it by his death. Therefore, in him are "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). To know and love and follow this Jesus is to own the treasure of ultimate and eternal happiness. Therefore, the command, "Get wisdom," means first and foremost "Come to Jesus! Come to Jesus!" in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom.

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WISDEST MAN IN THE ANCIENT WORLD (SEE 1 KINGS 4:29-33)

PROVERBS

— A GUIDE FOR LIVING WELL IN GOD'S WORLD —

BIBLICAL WISDOM LITERATURE

- EXPLORING HOW TO LIVE WELL IN GOD'S WORLD
- WISDOM IS NOT...
 - LAW (THOU SHALT... OR THOU SHALT NOT...)
 - PROPHECY (THUS SAYS THE LORD)
- WISDOM IS... THE ACCUMULATED INSIGHT OF GOD'S PEOPLE THROUGH GENERATIONS

1-9 AN INTRODUCTION TO PROVERBS 1:1-9

PROVERBS OF SOLOMON

FOR GAINING WISDOM

HEBREW: KHOKHMAH

SKILL, APPLIED KNOWLEDGE (SEE EXODUS 31:1-3)



THE FEAR OF THE LORD

- REVERENCE & AWE
- A MORAL MINDSET
- HUMBLE ONESELF BEFORE GOD

TEN SPEECHES FROM A FATHER TO A SON



LISTEN MY SON TO YOUR FATHER'S INSTRUCTIONS (1:8)

THE MORAL LOGIC OF PROVERBS



APPLY WISDOM IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD

10-29 HUNDREDS OF ANCIENT PROVERBS

MARRIAGE, JUSTICE, SPEECH, CHARACTER, FAMILY, FRIENDSHIP, FORGIVENESS, DEBT, POVERTY, WORK, ALCOHOL, GENEROSITY, WORK, CHARACTER, FAMILY, FRIENDSHIP, FORGIVENESS



THE FEAR OF THE LORD PROLONGS YOUR LIFE, BUT THE YEARS OF THE WICKED ARE CUT SHORT (10:27)

TRAIN UP A CHILD IN THE WAY THEY SHOULD GO, AND WHEN THEY'RE OLD THEY WON'T TURN FROM IT (22:6)

30 AGUR



I AM A BRUTE AND HAVE NO WISDOM (30:2-3)



MODEL READER OF PROVERBS

GOD'S WISDOM

FOUR POEMS OF LADY WISDOM 1:20-33 3:13-20 CH8 CH9



NOT GUILTY!

UPHOLDING JUSTICE

COME, LEARN FROM ME!

• A POETIC WAY OF CLAIMING THAT WE LIVE IN A MORAL UNIVERSE

• FEAR OF THE LORD & WISDOM = LIVING ALONG THE GRAIN OF THE UNIVERSE

INTEGRITY

GENEROSITY

PROVERBS ≠ GOOD ADVICE...
PROVERBS = GOD'S INVITATION TO LEARN WISDOM FROM PREVIOUS GENERATIONS

PROVERBS = PROBABILITIES



PROVERBS ≠ PROMISES



PROVERBS FOCUS ON

THE GENERAL RULE NOT EXCEPTIONS

ECCLESIASTES JOB

LIFE IS TOO COMPLEX FOR FORMULAS, WE NEED ALL THE WISDOM BOOKS TOGETHER

31 LEMUEL



HERE'S WHAT MY MOTHER TAUGHT ME:

• GUIDANCE FOR WISE LEADERSHIP (31:1-9)
• ALPHABET POEM ABOUT THE WISE WOMAN (31:10-31)



HER HUSBAND

THE POOR

HER CHILDREN

THE MERCHANTS