

Lesson 4: Searching

Proverbs 2:1-22 – Wisdom as a Quest

The search as the ache within the boredom as well as the anxiety in all the busyness

“Is this all?” and “Is this enough?”

Why is “searching for wisdom” so common in various cultures and time periods?

human existential lack draws us toward looking for what can fulfill

C. S. Lewis’ God-shaped void ... [once a Christian, never experience emptiness?]

also many believers resonate with “I still haven’t found what I’m looking for”

Where do we commonly search for wisdom, meaning, purpose, significance, the good life?

nature, beauty, books, money, materialism, power, success, sex, others, leisure

within, pilgrimage, seclusion, meditation

What type of person has hope for success in this search?

Pure – Holy Grail; Wit – Odysseus; Deep; Focused/Disciplined, etc. Different here

Where do you see this searching in our time and culture?

Internet, “always on,” Entertainment, Endless Scroll of newsfeeds, social media

Is this same search different in youth, mid-life, and later life?

Structural and Linguistic Items

A single connected poem with the form: If ... then ... so

“Advancing Parallelism” - intensifying (“for 3 yes for 4”); if, if if ... then, then ... so

If What? IF Wisdom IS Wanted

1. Progressing Picture of What it looks like to Value Wisdom

passive appreciation -> inwardly interest -> vocally asking -> intensely looking

ear -> heart -> voice -> whole self

2. Contrast with Common Expectations of a Quest – what is different?

Received Not Achieved – not by our effort

Known Not Discovered – not new exploration

Requested Not Realized – not novel idea but needed

3. Searching for Treasure

Intensity and Purpose make for great stories – often more lax personally

Matthew 13:44 – “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure ... sells all”

Focuses on Attaching Value and Living consistently according to that estimation

4. Begins with Receiving; Culminates with Searching

Not usually searching for something that is given to you

Broken Cisterns vs Springs of Living Water – Jeremiah 2:13

Then What? Then Wisdom WILL be Found

1. A Successful Quest

So Much of our Searching leaves Empty

This has a Guarantee of Success – promise of granting wisdom to those who want it

2. By A Gracious Gift

As the source of all wisdom, God also freely gives wisdom

No room for pride in our searching nor scorn for others still “looking”

3. Parallels - insights by arrangement of ideas

Fear of the Lord = righteousness, justice, equity (“the second is like unto it” – Mt 22:39)

Knowledge of God = every good path (Calvin, starting with God to understand all else)

LORD gives = wisdom comes into your heart (planted within and shapes all – Rom 12:2)

from his mouth ... = will be pleasant (God’s Word as Life-Giving – 2 Tim 3:16, Gen 2:7)

Protection of Wisdom – 7 = 11 and 8 = 11 (supplied, shielded, guarded), 8 = 12-19

4. Result is Rescue! (salvation/”delivering”)

constant close connection of wisdom and salvation -> faith/repentance in Christ

Two Sides of Salvation here - Two ways that Temptation Traps Us

1. Public: 12-15 (and 8a) From Social Sin (toward [social] justice)

2. Private: 16-19 (and 8b) From Secret Sin (toward [secret] faithfulness –Mt 6:18)

Watch the Words in Both Sections– “perverted speech” ... “smooth words”

consider ourselves easily manipulated (Gen 3:1)

constantly be fixed on God’s words (Mt 4 Jesus replies, It is written)

Perverted, Crooked, Devious - > Evil, Darkness (goes the wrong way)

So easy to just leave a little out or add in some of our own perspective

Socially – whose is important and not as much (smarts, looks, money, success, etc)

Politically – “us” versus “them”, fear tactics, “demonizing” and “canonizing”

“Christian” Culture – allowing non-Biblical values to shape our identity

Introduced to the “Forbidden” Woman (metaphor for all secret sins not just sexual)

meaning “out of bounds” – NOT FOR YOU – same of “strange” “foreign” woman

Forsakes – sin always leaves behind good (expulsive power of new affection?)

we often ignore the “opportunity cost” of sin when it is appealing

Forgets – her marriage covenant before God – reminds of vertical dimension

in secret sins especially prone to forgetting relational consequences

Invitation to Hell ... not so appealing when you put it that way!

So What? Walking in Wisdom

Remains - Not Failing/Falling inherits Lasting Promise (only Christ before us and working in us)

Rooted Out - Impermanence of Wicked / Destruction of Curse (Christ cursed for us, Judge)

Lesson 5: Finding

Proverbs 3:1-35 – Wisdom’s Blessing

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. - Mt 6:21

Already told how to find (searching, Prov 2), now told what is found (wisdom and more)

Why do we want wisdom? Its benefit or itself

What benefits do we hope wisdom provides?

Wisdom is more than a mere goal – treasures of the good life with her

Wisdom is more than a means to an end – desirable for who she is

Hedonist Paradox

Those who pursue pleasure/happiness most are not at all the happiest or most fulfilled

The happiest and most fulfilled people have always pursued other goals with their life.

Paradox is that Happiness cannot be pursued directly, only found indirectly

Wisdom, on the other hand, should be pursued directly, and has happiness in tow

“those who hold her fast are called blessed [happy]” – Prov 4:18b

and wisdom, of course, is the fear of the LORD.

“to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever” – WSC #1

Two words stand out in the chapter – the “LORD” and “Not”

Solution to the Paradox: The happiness we desire comes from the Lord Not Ourselves

American Culture One of the Most Prosperous in History but Higher Suicide Rates

A Call back to the One who gives that Prosperity and Life Abundant

Action (odd verses) leading to Accompanying Benefit (even verses) in verses 1-12

Again voice of the father to the son, especially motivating by what is found with wisdom

“forget” and “forsake” connect to 2:17

emphasizes faith “extra nos” or “outside of ourselves” in the Lord for the good life

What are the actions? How would you sum them up?

How do they advance through verses 1-12?

Why is this so difficult for us? Why all the “not”s?

Does it get more challenging as it goes? wealth, discipline

What are the accompanying benefits? How would you sum them up?

How do they fit well with the particular actions?

What more could you want? Long life with lots of money, fame, love, and peace!

Wise in Own Eyes – a perspective on wisdom and foolishness

Gen 3:6 “when the woman saw that the tree ...”

Once we let our “eyes” be the ultimate interpreters, already foolish rebels

Wisdom and Blessing 13-18

Aesop's fable, The Dog and His Reflection

By Comparison – Shall I compare thee to a ~~summer's day~~ treasure found?

But do we jump more quickly at opportunities for silver, gold, jewels, better investment?

Do we love, desire, and pursue wisdom, desiring her above all else?

In Her Hands – what is said to be in her right and left hands? Why?

Often we are enamored at what she holds, wanting to get it from her

Instead we are to embrace all of her, appreciating the gifts she brings

A Tree of Life!!! – ultimate blessing of fullness of life abundant confirmed forever

Only in 3 books, beginning of Gen, end of Revelation, and Proverbs (11:30; 13:12; 15:4).

Cannot overstate the important or benefit of wisdom then!

Living with Wisdom like Walking in Eden's Paradise or New Jerusalem's City Streets

Again wisdom as salvation – and not only justification, but sanctification and glorification

The Lord's Wisdom

Characteristic/Companion of the Lord in building the Cosmos

How Amazing to Share the Same in building our Lives under Him

Wisdom and Protection 21-26

Waking or Sleeping there is protection and confidence from wisdom/the Lord

Fear and Anxiety become unnecessary in light of the Lord's "keeping"

Wisdom and Peace

Why all the "do not"s? Is this so difficult?

What type of community does this create though?

The Two Ways - Blessing and Curse

There's a flip side to all the blessing/happiness, in case we missed it

Without wisdom, none of those things, instead the opposite

Without wisdom, misery and condemnation

Blessing and Curse seen in Jesus – leads away from Tree of Knowledge to the Tree of Life

Colossians 2:2-4 "*Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom ...*"

Proverbs 3:34 – beautiful and scary

Quoted in both James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5

Favor freely given

Honor/Glory vs. Shame/Disgrace – for the believer "clothed in Christ righteousness"

Lesson 6: Gaining

Proverbs 4:1-27 – Wisdom and Progress

We apply evaluation of progress and goals to specific areas of life more often than whole of life

Wisdom has a holistic application to each and every area of life

How do you tell if you are making progress in life?

What does it take to keep advancing?

How do evaluate your progress?

Aiming (Goal) – 4:1-9

Multi-generational wisdom – grandfather to father to son – always relevant

Aim at nothing and you will hit it every time

What is the goal here? “Get Wisdom!” v5, 7

Why should wisdom be the highest priority of goals (“whatever you get, get insight”)?

What other things often take priority in life?

Work, Family, Kids, Entertainment, Success, Reputation, Church, Morality

Wisdom as Exalting

“prize HER highly, and SHE will exalt you” (see also 3:34, 1 Peter 5:5)

Anti-pragmatic and All-pragmatic at the same time

Not “only results matter,” nor “end justifies the means”

Still BEST and ASSURED results from Wisdom

Wisdom and Gospel – 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

What should we aim at in life?

Not directly at Results – similar to Hedonistic Paradox

Aim at faithfulness to the Lord in every sphere of life

So also continually aiming at repentance (mortification and vivification)

Helpful to keep aiming correctly

Progress – Walking in Wisdom 4:10-19

Wisdom as a Path

Why do you think Proverbs so often uses the analogy of a path/way/road?

We can become so familiar that we fail to appreciate the metaphor

Not unique to Scripture but deeply integrated within it

Complex of Choices, Consequences, Continually

Keeps Progression and Movement (destination) always in view

Where Are you? (Gen 3:9) AND Where are you Going? (Gen 4:6-7)

Do we often look at Location NOT Movement to Destination? (Ez 18:25-29)

Two Paths and Progress

Past Example and Personal Responsibility – “I have led you ... when you walk...” v12

Path of Progress vs Way of Wickedness – “brighter and brighter” vs “stumbling darkness”

Jesus and the Two Gates/Paths – Matt 7:13-14

Broad Way is Easy with Many -> Destruction

Narrow Way is Hard with Few -> Life

In Proverbs also contrast Smooth vs Stumbling (able to handle life well)

Always instructs about the evil way as well – Why is it helpful to know?

What is the problem with it? Where does it lead?

Entrance into Temptation – John Owen

“Do not enter the path of wicked” v14 “... lead us not into temptation” Mt 6:13

Why do we need to watch out for the entrance?

What might this look like?

Intensity of Warning – Avoid! (because it is hard to say no, and very dangerous)

1 Corinthians 10:13 – often we neglect the early way of escape

Evil as Addictive – builds and builds (progress in the wrong direction)

Lust, Laziness, Greed, Gossip as Easy Examples

Sin as Enslaving – “cannot ... unless...” (need their fix) – Rom 6:16-17

Sin as Encompassing – Sleep, Eat, Drink – sustained by it (except it always leaves empty)

Evaluating – 4:20-27

Progress is also dependent on Evaluating and Paying Attention to the Details

Wisdom as Life-giving and Healing – 22

How often do we miss things that “we knew” but “weren’t paying attention”?

Tangible ways to evaluate and focus

Heart – Mark 7:21-23, “from within out of the heart of man, comes ...”

What does it look like to “keep/guard your heart”

Speech – James 1:26, 3:1-12

What does our speech reveal?

“That’s not what I really meant though ...” But why did we say it that way?

Eyes – Matthew 6:22-23

Do we need horse blinders? Movie of your eye’s focus during a day?

How does this apply in a visual/digital/screen age, especially?

Feet – Rom 3:15, Rom 10:15

What happens when you veer off the highway?

How beautiful are the feet of him (Christ) who brings good news!

“He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus!” – Phil 1:6