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## PROVERBS 2

### Proverbs Series

Proverbs 2 is what we're looking at.

This week I was in Dallas and I was in a homeschool conference. I'm always thinking about Calvary Chapel and what we can learn from these different churches that I visit or whatever, what can we bring back to our church.

At this homeschool conference they had all these different booths around. We had our own booth for the National Center for Biblical Parenting. When it was quiet I was walking around some other booths and I'm thinking, "We're going to be teaching about Proverbs on Sunday. There are people who have Bible studies for kids and stuff around here, so I'm going to go and find out if there's someone who has something on the book of Proverbs."

So I go to this couple, Mike and Carolyn Riggs. This is Mike and Carolyn Riggs and they had all these Bible studies. So I said, "Do you have anything on the book of Proverbs?"

Here's what they said to me: "I only have something on Proverbs 2." I leaned over the table – "What did you say?" I couldn't believe it because I knew right now we're in a God moment. God is doing something because I'm teaching Proverbs 2 and these guys are saying, "We only have something on Proverbs 2."

I spent the next thirty minutes talking to these people because they believe that Proverbs 2 is the key to the whole book of Proverbs. A key to wisdom for any of us. Wow. It was just fascinating for me to listen to the things they had to say.

Some of the things I'm going to share with you today actually come from the things I learned from them and the things we talked about together. As we study this book of Proverbs we're talking about wisdom and what that is because it's not good enough to be right, it's also important for us to be wise.

Last week we looked at Proverbs 1 and I want to take you back to Proverbs 1:1-7. We really looked at this model. We're going to see these words – knowledge, understanding, and wisdom – throughout the book of Proverbs. But I'm tying them together in this way.

There's noise that we have in life. There's a lot of confusion. A lot of times we feel overwhelmed by the noise that we're hearing and out of that noise then comes some knowledge or some information. Understanding is "I get it" and then wisdom is "I'm going to do something

different.” So wisdom always implies action based on some insight or some understanding or something new.

Now if we go to Proverbs 1:1-7 we’re going to see one of the ways that we increase in this idea of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. If we go to that particular passage in Proverbs 1:1-7 we see all of these words that have to do with listening, getting instruction, and so on. This was last week. This was our teaching from last week.

These are really important words that imply that if you’re going to move up this path to move to wisdom that you’re going to listen to advice, you’re going to get instruction, there’s going to be some new information coming into your life. That may be by coming to church, but we don’t limit it to that. It may be by taking a class in a college somewhere. I would love to write a book some day on how to get a Christian education out of a public school because I’m convinced we can do it because God is the author of all knowledge. So as we understand that and apply that in our lives then getting more instruction and advice can contribute to our ability to move up this path.

Now if we only do it on a humanistic level we’re missing something very important. So we go back to Proverbs 1:1-7 and we have this other word – *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge*. So we must understand knowledge, understanding, and wisdom in a bigger context of what God is doing in our world and what He’s doing in our lives. When we understand that then this fear of the Lord then becomes this lifestyle that we have. We let God speak.

I want to encourage you during the study that we’re doing on the back of your bulletin there’s a place for you to write what is one thing you’re learning from Proverbs 2 or Proverbs 1? Keep track of those things because what’s going to happen as you’re doing that is you’re going to see God speak.

This verse says that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge*. But in Proverbs 9:10 it says that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*. Fear of the Lord, this understanding of who God is and how He’s working, is going to be very important. Once we understand that, then we have another piece that moves us up this path besides just advice and instruction; it’s the fear of the Lord. Recognizing that God is at work.

So ask yourself this question – what is God teaching me today? Maybe not here today, but maybe tomorrow when you get up and you start living your life God is present and around you and He wants to teach you vibrantly in your life. So you want to ask the question, “What is God doing?” and then in the midst of that you’ll be able to experience more of these kinds of things that we’re talking about.

That’s last week. I’m just adding some more things that we didn’t get to talk about last week. But now as we move into chapter 2 we’re going to read this passage and I want to share some things with you about this passage. I’m going to throw up the passage on the screen because I want to do some highlighting in the passage and I want you to see it. I want you to see what I’m talking about.

I'm going to read these words in just a moment, but if we're on a treasure map trying to get wisdom, the first step on the treasure map is going to be the fear of the Lord. The second step is to desire it or to want it. I want you to just see all the different words that describe that idea of wanting it or desiring it or going to get it. It's not just something that comes to you.

Let me read the passage to you. Proverbs 2:1-5: *My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding—indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.*

This is where I get the idea of the treasure map because of the words *hidden treasure* down there. Those words help us understand that this is something we go after. It's something that we're trying to find. If you're looking for treasure you don't find it on the sidewalk. You go digging for it. You go find it.

Look at all of those words that are used there. To *accept*, to *store up*, to *turn your ear*, to *apply your heart*, to *call out*, to *cry out*, to *look for it*, *search for it*. Solomon is writing these words and he's saying one of the very important things you need to do is go after it. Don't just assume it's going to come to you. It often doesn't just come to you.

In fact the naïve person, or we're going to see in Proverbs the simple person, just says, "Oh everything will work out." The person who says, "Oh it's all going to work out," is the person who doesn't understand, doesn't have knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, that there's some work we do here.

We go dig it up. We go find out what it is. And that means often doing some new thing. Sometimes we get into patterns in our lives and we get stuck in those patterns and even we think they're good patterns, and maybe they are good patterns, but God doesn't speak right now through those patterns and we need to change to something different.

It reminds me of our study in John. Remember when in the study of John in John 21 as we were finishing the study, Jesus was on the shore and He says to His disciples (they didn't even know it was Him), "*Throw your nets on the other side of the boat.*" Now these were seasoned fishermen. Why should they throw their nets on the other side of the boat? Well Jesus is saying, "Throw your nets on the other side of the boat. Try something different here. Just listen to me," and they do. These seasoned fishermen who knew all about fishing threw their nets on the other side of the boat and they had 153 large fish, the Bible says. Amazing.

I think that sometimes we just need to say, "If it's not working maybe we need to try something different." And sometimes God works in that something different. Not that the thing we're doing is wrong necessarily, but God wants to do something new in our lives. So if we're pursuing knowledge and understanding and wisdom it means we're growing. It means something happens.

If you're stuck somewhere and not growing then you want to make a change. You want to start moving in a direction to understand what that looks like. Sometimes that means attending a class

somewhere or getting involved in a Bible study. A lady was telling me this week that she's involved in a Bible study at work. What a great way to be connecting to the Lord in the midst of a work situation. So pursue it. That's what he's talking about.

I think people get stuck in their ways. Wisdom means learning something new, listening to advice. It doesn't just come to the person that is busy. It's like a treasure. We need to go after it. It's a hidden treasure is what it's saying.

Now notice the word *hidden treasure* there it's talking about because it's something that you go after. I like this statement: "God doesn't always put His best cookies on the bottom shelf." Sometimes you have to reach for them. I think sometimes in our lives we need to go dig a little bit. Sometimes it means spending extra time in the word or turning on a sermon on the radio or somehow connecting with God in a new way, and God does something special.

The other word that's interesting in this passage in Proverbs 2 is the word *heart* there. Do you see that? When I see the word *treasure* and *heart* together I'm drawn to that New Testament passage where Jesus says to His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount, "*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*" What you wrap your heart around has to do with what you value. What do you value?

The writer to the book of Proverbs is saying value wisdom. Wisdom is going to be this very important part of your life and what God wants to do in the midst of it. Treasure it, find it, get it. What does that mean for you? I don't know. I just know that it means that we're moving in that process and trying to understand what it looks like.

Then notice again in Proverbs 2:5 we have those same words again – *the fear of the Lord*. Because this isn't just about getting knowledge. If we want knowledge we go to college; if you want wisdom you go to God. Because God is the author of wisdom and He's the one who brings this stuff together. Because when we start understanding these things we see who God is, we see who we are, we see the plan that God has. Our eyes are opened up to new ways to relating to people, new ways of interacting with others.

What is this fear of the Lord? I think it's two things. One is it's awareness that God is at work. And the other is that there's this commitment to allow Him to run our lives. So when we have the fear of the Lord, when we're characterized by that then we have this thing going on inside of our lives and inside of our hearts that's very valuable and important.

God is at work. That's what we're seeing here. That's why the fear of the Lord is emphasized at the beginning and at the end.

Notice something interesting. We already saw in Proverbs 1:1-7 that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge* and beginning of wisdom. That's step number one on the treasure map toward wisdom. But notice at the end he says *then you will understand the fear of the Lord*. So if you search for wisdom and if you're going after understanding and you're looking for knowledge, all those things mentioned up there, then what's going to happen? Then you're going to understand the fear of the Lord.

If you don't understand it then we're going after knowledge, understanding, wisdom. We're trying to develop those things in our lives and then the fear of the Lord is going to become more obvious because then we're going to see, "Wow." How many times have you heard people say, "I really was into science or I was studying psychology or whatever it is and then in the midst of that – wow – I just saw how big God is and how God works in amazing ways." So often when we pursue knowledge or we're pursuing understanding or wisdom, God reveals Himself and then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

When we look at this chart of going forward we need to acknowledge this other factor. The fear of the Lord is going to move us up and it actually somehow becomes the result in the midst of that.

If we go back to now another passage, the next part of the passage in Proverbs 2:6-10 (again I'm putting it up here because I'm going to mark it up), I want you to see what it looks like here as we're moving forward.

First I want you to see our three words again right in the first verse there, verse 6. We're coming to a related, but very important concept – that God is the one who gives these things. Do you see that? *The Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding.*

I'm convinced that all knowledge and all understanding and all wisdom is God's. Now you may go and learn it from a professor in a school or from a book or some other place, but you're learning more about life the way God created it and you're finding out more about who God is. God is the author of these things. I just wanted you to see that these are the three words again mentioned in Proverbs 2:6-10.

One of the things that I read in verses 7-11 is I want you to see some other words will jump out off the page for you. These are words that give us an understanding of why do we do this. Why are we going after this? Is this optional? It's not optional. This isn't like some people are smart and some people are dumb. And I'm content to be dumb. We're not talking about that. We're talking about the wisdom that we have we want to gain for our lives because it's going to do something for us. God does something with wisdom in our hearts and it has to do with these words – *shield, guard, protect*. Let's just read the passage and then we'll come back and we'll talk more specifically about it.

*For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones. Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.*

Are we getting the idea? There's something that happens, this internal protection system that God designed that comes somehow in the midst of this pursuit of knowledge and understanding and wisdom. What does that look like?

We have those words that are there and they're helping us understand in practical terms that there's a sense of urgency here. It's not just a choice. "Oh well, I'm going to go get an advanced degree." We all need an advanced degree in heart management and we need the protection that comes from pursuing wisdom.

So I hope today as you're looking at this passage you start saying to yourself, "Wow, I need this. This isn't optional. I've got to go after this. I've got to look for ways to find this wisdom that is talked about in the book of Proverbs. I need to understand what that looks like in practical terms."

Notice again we have the word *heart*. *Wisdom will enter your heart* because it's the protection of the heart that we need. Your heart is such a strategic place. It's a place where all kinds of things happen. We wrestle with things in our hearts. When you make life decisions they come from your heart. When you're tempted it comes from your heart. When you get emotionally upset it's in your heart. So there's a protection that happens inside your heart that we need and God is trying to help us understand what that looks like in practical terms.

So wisdom is skillfully applying this knowledge and understanding to our lives in a way that protects us in some strategic ways. It protects us and we're going to see as we read on how it's going to protect.

Verse 12 says, *Wisdom will save you*, but the idea is that there's something that happens inside your heart. A couple chapters later in chapter 4 it's going to say this: *Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life*.

Your heart is a very special place. It's a place that God designed to be protected because that's where a lot of stuff happens. It happens in the heart first before it comes out in behavior, so you better protect the heart. Deal with it there in your heart first before it comes out. And wisdom is very practical. It's right there to help you, to guide you. It provides this internal defense system for you in your own life to protect you.

Let me just show you one more thing. In these verses in Proverbs 2:6-10 I just want to point out that these three words are used again. I just want you to see these three words. I'm not making this up. Those three words are often going to be repeated in the book of Proverbs, sometimes together, often apart. But they're words that we need to be looking toward and moving toward in our lives.

Now go on. I want to take us through the rest of the passage. I'm not going to throw anymore up here, so you have to look in your own Bibles. Starting in verse 12 here's what we see.

Wisdom will do this. This is what it's going to save you from. *Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse*. Perverse has the idea of being crooked or perverted, the idea of a fraud, someone who might lead you in the wrong direction. So wisdom has this way of protecting you from that person.

Here are some more characteristics of the wicked person. You want to know this because this is one of our seven characters in the book of Proverbs that we're going to come across, the wicked person. Here's a great passage that describes the wicked person and who he is.

*Who have left the straight paths.* So there's a path that we live, a straight path, but they've left the straight path. You want to be on the straight path. *They have left the straight path to walk in dark ways, they delight in doing wrong.* So this is how you're going to know a wicked person is that they take delight in doing the wrong thing. There are some people who just like to do the wrong thing and that's who they are.

Here's the thing. We are tempted every day in our lives. We're tempted and have our hearts drawn to something. It's important for us to understand that we need this internal protection inside of our heart. This isn't just a Proverbs concept. Do you remember that Jesus when He was teaching us to pray in the Lord's Prayer He said, "*Lead us not into temptation, deliver us from evil.*" This is a very important part of who we need to be. We need to be praying to God regularly because we are easily drawn aside.

In Psalm 1 a similar thing. I'm going to read this from Psalm 1. It says, *Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.*

There's a contrast between the person who's wicked and the person who's wise. All the way through the book of Proverbs we're going to see that.

So one aspect of wisdom is not just being smarter; one aspect of wisdom is choosing the right path, staying on the right path. But there are temptations to take us off the right path.

I think the problem with the wicked person is we don't often recognize him. If we were going to draw a picture of the wicked person, he's not going to have his eyebrows down with a cigar in his mouth and kind of looking at you like, "I'm going to get you." No. You know what he's going to look like? He's going to look like the guy with the latest styles. He's going to look really cool, maybe just a little bit on the edge. Better styles than you have so that you're attracted to it. "Ooh, I think I want to do that. I like that." So he's very attractive.

How are you going to know the difference between the wicked person and the person who's doing the right thing? That's not an easy thing. I'm not saying styles are bad or trying to look good is bad. That's not what I'm saying, but you just have to know the wicked person is not going to be easy to find.

He's going to drag you away or he's going to entice you to take a path. "Hey this looks really attractive. I think I'm going to try this. What's wrong with it anyway?" And so people start doing things or acting in ways. They say, "What's wrong with it?" and then they find themselves in trouble not too far down the path. They start using language that's a little bit different than what they've used before. They're starting to move down the path and they don't even realize it. Or the entertainment choices they pick up are challenging them spiritually. Not that it's wrong.

Maybe there's nothing wrong with that particular movie, but it's starting to move you down a place that's taking you off the straight path. Or the choice of music. Who knows what it is.

He's saying there's a danger here and wisdom protects you from the wicked person. Why? Because you can see through the veneer. You can see what's happening because you have knowledge, you have understanding, you have the wisdom and you can take the action then to avoid the wrong thing and stay on the right path.

What is the right path? God has designed that right path for us. We need to make a choice to stay on it.

Now some things are the same for all of us, that God has commands that we need to obey that keeps us on the right path. Those things are nonnegotiable and we obey the Lord in those. But there are a lot of things that are different for each one of us. Your right path may be different than my right path in some of these other areas. God may allow you to do something that He doesn't allow me to do. That's okay. That's part of the right path. The question is, what is God saying to you in the midst of that? How is God working in your life? Be careful, he's saying. Wisdom will help you know what to do.

And now we're going to see as we continue on in the passage an example of one kind of wicked person described several times in the book of Proverbs. We'll come back to this idea some more. But notice what he's saying here in verse 16. *Wisdom will save you also from the adulterous woman, from the wayward woman with her seductive words, who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God. Surely her house leads down to death and her paths to the spirits of the dead. None who go to her return or attain the paths of life.*

This may be a prostitute, it may be just adultery, it may be pornography that takes a person down a path that starts to damage them. Notice it says in verse 19, *None who go to her return or attain the paths of life.* We're going to see on our treasure map that you have maybe in your mind now (hopefully I'll be able to create one by the time our study is down), but in our treasure map you've got these different stops along the treasure map and one of those stops is to have a plan for sexual purity. It's going to be developed more in the book of Proverbs, so we'll talk about it more as we move forward.

But notice here that wisdom protects you in that area. *Understanding will guard your heart.* All these things that we just read, this is what it does for you. That's why it's so valuable to have wisdom and to understand what that looks like as you're trying to move forward in your life.

Let's finish the passage in chapter 2 here. Verse 20. This is kind of the end. Here's where we go. This is why it's so good to be pursuing wisdom. *Thus you will walk in the ways of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous. For the upright will live in the land, and the blameless will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the unfaithful will be torn from it.*

I like to say it this way: There's a right way to live and there's a wrong way to live. And we make choices every day.

Some woman yesterday at my booth came and said, “I have a sixteen year old who just isn’t following the Lord. I don’t know what to do.” I said, “Your job is to communicate what’s going on in your heart because you know there’s a right way to live and there’s a wrong way to live. And if you choose the right way, there’s blessing that’s on that path.”

That’s what this passage is talking about. Do you know what the right way is? That’s so important. See, the whole emphasis of this stop on our wisdom treasure map is to desire wisdom, to want it, to get it, to find out what it is, to make it a part of our lives. It’s not just about being smarter. It’s about fearing the Lord and getting a bigger understanding of what life is. To move out of the noise of our lives. Many of us get caught in that noise. To move above that, to follow the Lord, and watch what God is doing. To allow Him to control our lives and then to be on this pursuit to grow spiritually.

What does it mean to grow? What does it mean to grow for each one of us? That’s a challenge sometimes. I would encourage you to take a look at that in your own life. What is God doing? God will speak to you. He’ll lead you. He’ll guide you in the path that will move you in the right direction.

It’s a beautiful thing, but it starts with this idea of the fear of the Lord. I think that should shake us. Do I understand the fear of the Lord? It’s the first step on the treasure map. What does that mean? It means to be aware of what God is doing and to commit myself to Him and to allow Him to guide me. Maybe that means guide me in some new way, maybe it means go deeper in what I’m doing. Maybe stay away from something that I’m attracted to. It means follow the Lord. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.* It’s also the *beginning of wisdom.* I would encourage you to think about what God might be doing in your heart in regards to this.

Really fun. Next week we’re going to look at, I think so far in my study, nine different things in chapter 3. But we’re going to look at a bunch of stuff there in chapter 3 that will keep us on the right path and moving in the right direction. I encourage you to read ahead and just allow God to speak to you because in the midst of things that are said like this, God will say something that’s very specific to you and He’ll speak to you in ways that will guide you exactly where He wants you to be. Okay? Let’s stand and pray together.

[PRAYER] Lord, we do desire you with all of our hearts and we know that you love us and you know us. You know the challenges we face. You know the problems that we’ve had. You know the things that we are facing us right now in our lives and you know us. You call us by our name. You know the hairs of our head. You write our name on your hands. You count every tear that we have. Lord, you know us and you call us to do what you want us to do. So I pray that you would speak to each one of us today. Draw us closer to you, Lord. As we worship now and sing another song we do ask you to speak, to teach us, to apply these words to our hearts. Guard us and protect us. Lead us to the next step that you want us to take, each one of us in our own lives. In Jesus’ name, amen.