

Proverbs 2:1-5

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/prov/prov-2/proverbs-21-5/>

Continuing his introduction to The Book of Proverbs, Solomon uses cause-and-effect descriptions to communicate the value and benefit of wisdom.

Solomon takes up the voice of a father to his *son*. Proverbs may have been a curriculum for young boys at a school, so *my son* is used here in that affectionate way an older person refers to a younger one, whether they are related or not.

There is a lot of poetic symmetry in chapter 2 of Proverbs. There are twenty-two verses, the same as the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The first 11 verses focus on the benefits of wisdom and the latter half on the dangers of wickedness. The purpose here is to communicate the ever-present nature of this choice between wisdom and evil—the very essence of our reality.

Solomon emphasizes Lady Wisdom’s invitation in Chapter 1 to live wisely. Proverbs is a book about how the world works and how we are to act in the face of that reality. Living consistently with the world’s design brings about our maximum benefit, and is the essence of wisdom. In order to see this reality, we must listen to God, and to Lady Wisdom.

Solomon begins explaining the process of that reality by saying, *if you will receive my words and treasure my commandments within you*. The first thing we have to do is *receive*. Wisdom is not something we have solely within ourselves, or—at least—it is something that needs to be activated and awakened within us by encountering The Divine (God).

So *receiving* is the first condition. But it is not enough just to accept and *receive*; to consume. The second condition is one of ownership. *If you will receive my words AND treasure my commandments within you*. Not just using and discarding God’s guidance when it suits us, but integrating it into the very fabric of our being so that it transforms our perception and our actions. And so, Solomon adds to the condition of *receiving words* that the wisdom-seeker is to *treasure my commandments within you*. The word translated *treasure* here is the Hebrew word “*tsaphan*.” It could also be translated “store” or “hide.” So, these commandments should not be in-one-ear-out-the-other; they are meant to be something that we retain, like a treasure we would store in a safe place.

There is a paradox here (and throughout all of Proverbs). We are to pursue, choose, and act in wisdom. Yet wisdom does not come from us, we need to *receive* it as a gift from God. We cannot create wisdom, we can only discover and steward wisdom. The paradox is resolved through faith. When we choose to align ourselves with the gift of God’s wisdom by believing the truth of His ways, the two sides of the coin harmonize: *receive* and *treasure* (leading to wise actions).

These are the two conditions necessary for wisdom to prevail in our lives. 1) We must hear, *receive*, and accept the worldview of wisdom and the potential of its benefits. This means we

adopt wisdom's perspective instead of our own. And 2) we must take those teachings to *heart* and work to apply them to our lives as we make choices and take actions—*treasure* them in our hearts. We must *receive* and *treasure*, adopt and steward, receive and apply. As Solomon continues in the next few verses, he focuses on the first of those two conditions—receiving.

The next phrase is *make your ear attentive to wisdom (receive) and incline your heart to understanding (treasure)*. Because wisdom begins as a gift, something external we need to *receive*, it is imperative for us to focus our attention and turn toward it. To pay attention to it. To listen with an intent to adopt.

Once we hear we need to progress to *understanding*. The *understanding* should become a part of us, seep into our *heart*. That is the prerequisite for those-who- would-be-wise, to steward what wisdom teaches. It is an application of the *heart*, meaning something we take into the fullness of ourselves. So that pursuing and applying *understanding* becomes an extension of who we are. It becomes a way of thinking and a way of life.

This set of verses is not just a reinforcement of verse 1, but also a progression. The progression is that verse 1 says we need to *receive*, and verses 2-4 are suggesting that if reception is the necessary first step, we need to posture ourselves in a way to best *receive*. *Making our ear attentive* will help us hear and put us in the best position to *receive*. So Solomon is saying that if reception is vital, we do well to seek to be *attentive*.

These verses encourage us to tune our hearts to the truth. We will tune our ears to something that calls itself truth. The question is whether it is actual truth. By inclining our heart to understanding, we are choosing the truth of God as our tuning fork, aligning ourselves with reality as God defines it. Pursuing truth on His terms.

The word *for* in verse 3 lets us know Solomon is continuing to reinforce the idea already presented for a third time: *for if you cry for discernment and lift your voice for understanding and if you seek her (understanding) as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures*. We do well to seek wisdom, to chase after it. To pursue wisdom. To long for it, *crying out* and *lifting our voice*. Basically, begging for it. And value it, like *silver* and a *treasure* that matters so much to us we *hide* it in a safe place to prevent it from being stolen.

If we do all of this, seeking wisdom with longing, then we *will discern the fear of the Lord*. This phrase comes directly after the call to *search for her as hidden treasures*, the last of a similar set of instructions to pursue wisdom as a vital value. Hiding a *treasure* is a sign of value. The *fear* of losing it is in proportion to how much it matters to you. Solomon said in Chapter 1, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” ([see notes on Proverbs 1:7-9](#)). When we value wisdom enough that we seek it wholeheartedly, when we treasure it so much we fear losing it, we will understand what it means to *fear* the Lord. To *treasure* Him in our hearts. To care what God thinks about our actions above all other fears. These values should seep into the depths of who we are. To seek our own self-interest, we should make them an integral part of who we are, and protect them from the marauders of falsehood.

If the pupil submits to this journey, Solomon promises (in verse 5) that they will not only *discern the fear of the Lord* but also *discover the knowledge of God*. This is the great effect of *making our ear attentive, crying out, and lifting our voice*. The grand consequence of seeking is finding *the knowledge of God*. We cannot be God, but through faith and obedience we can discover God's *knowledge*. The *knowledge* of how life truly works, and how we can gain our maximum fulfillment. *Knowledge* and wisdom are the keys to a meaningful life. If we pay attention and are willing to *receive*, we will *discover the knowledge of God*.

Biblical Text

**My son, if you will receive my words
And treasure my commandments within you,**

**2 Make your ear attentive to wisdom,
Incline your heart to understanding;**

**3 For if you cry for discernment,
Lift your voice for understanding;**

**4 If you seek her as silver
And search for her as for hidden treasures;**

**5 Then you will discern the fear of the Lord
And discover the knowledge of God.**