

Proverbs 8:10-13

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/prov/prov-8/proverbs-810-13/>

As Solomon continues Lady Wisdom's speech, he moves from the introductory proclamations about the essence of wisdom into the realities of wisdom's benefit.

This section begins with an exhortation: “*Take my instruction and not silver*” (vs 10). Here, Solomon sets up a direct comparison between two paths we believe lead to our best interest. *Silver* is a way to purchase material possessions. It can also buy influence and power. Yet it is not as valuable as wisdom's instruction.

We all pursue what we believe to be in our best interest. Whether we chase after fame, fortune, relationships, community involvement, or character building, we are doing it because we believe it will enrich our lives, and lead us to fulfillment. Lady Wisdom holds forth that wisdom is the actual means to our most fulfilling end.

Lady Wisdom shows in this section that wisdom itself is the greatest treasure a person can acquire. There is nothing more valuable, nothing more worthwhile, nothing better for us.

The command here is to *take* (literally “*take hold of*”). It requires action and ownership on our part. We cannot be only spectators in order to gain wisdom, we must be participants. What wisdom is offering is *instruction*. Wisdom will show us how to gain the greatest treasure available. And unlike the illusions of happiness promised by the world, wisdom is something each of us can gain without requiring the cooperation or collaboration of any other human.

- Fame requires others to pay attention, which is inevitably fleeting.
- The “more” of materialism can never be obtained.
- Power is always limited.
- Wisdom is ours, if we will only pursue it.

The only way we can *take* ownership of wisdom is to find it in an external source (God, teachers of God) and learn from it. *Instruction* is about improvement and development. Wisdom is offering to develop us into better, healthier, more complete people. It is the true path to fulfillment. Unlike other pursuits, wisdom can be obtained regardless of circumstances. It can be sought and acquired whether we are experiencing want or plenty.

The superiority of wisdom to material gain is repeated in the similar phrase, “*and knowledge rather than choicest gold*” (vs 10).

Knowledge is teaching that empowers our ability to discern reality. Understanding what is real and true is much more valuable than *gold*. Fools will spend *gold* foolishly. Money is power to get “what we want.” Those whose desires lead to their own destruction merely escalate self-harm when their resources expand.

Our resources will be either squandered (often to our own harm) or invested wisely (to our great benefit) depending upon the extent to which we seek and embrace wisdom. Resources are of themselves neutral. Whether they bring us benefit or harm depends on whether we learn to steward them well.

Therefore, *instruction* is more valuable than *gold* or *silver*. “*For wisdom is better than jewels; and all desirable things cannot compare with her*” (vs 11).

The materials of this world also are neutral entities. They get their value (or their danger) by the way humans steward them. They are inanimate objects. Wisdom, though, is the source of life and is therefore *better than jewels*. And nothing we desire can *compare with her* (wisdom) because only wisdom has the ability to transform our lives into what we were truly meant to be. It only follows that a created being will only be fulfilled when that being functions according to its design. Wisdom leads us to align with God’s creative order.

Wisdom is preparing us for good stewardship by inviting us to *take* hold of her *instruction*. She says, “*I, wisdom, dwell with prudence*” (vs 12). The Hebrew word for *prudence* is “*arma*” and it is used as a synonym for cleverness. So Lady Wisdom is telling us that *prudence* is a byproduct of wisdom. They *dwell* together. They live in the same house.

Wisdom also exclaims, “*And I find knowledge and discretion*” (vs 12). Again, Wisdom is claiming that all of these attributes are tied together, and all are intimately connected to her. She is the amalgamation of these things. Or, said differently, pressing into her leads to the immensely positive outcomes of *knowledge*, *discretion* and *prudence*.

Throughout Proverbs, Solomon has shown that there are two paths we can each choose: The path of wisdom and the path of wickedness. It is a binary choice. At any moment, each of us are either choosing the road to abundant life or the road to death. There is no third way.

The lighthouse that shows us the way of wisdom is *the fear of the lord* (vs 13). After shouting about the benefits of wisdom over wickedness, Lady Wisdom proclaims “*The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.*” She is warning that there is no way to straddle the paths. You cannot simultaneously pursue silver as a means to happiness and also wisdom’s instruction—you cannot serve God and money (Matthew 6:24).

That does not mean we cannot have resources and still trust God; almost everyone has some measure of resources, and greed has no minimum. But this does mean that we cannot trust God and also trust our resources—one must serve the other. We either trust God, and steward our resources according to wisdom. Or we trust our resources, which will cause us to spurn the great benefits of wisdom.

The fear of the Lord is used in strategic spots two other times in Proverbs (Proverbs 1:7 and 2:5). In both cases they are connected to either *instruction* (1:7) or *knowledge* (2:5). So this verse may not be as abrupt a change as it seems. *If the fear of the Lord* is the lighthouse, *instruction* and *knowledge* are what it illuminates.

Fear is the most fundamental motivation for humans. We all have fear at the headwaters of our actions. Perhaps we fear starvation. Or being alone. Or being irrelevant. All these fears spur action. Proverbs is telling us that the beginning of wisdom is the *fear of the Lord*, as our first and most fundamental motivation.

The fear of the Lord might be thought of like our fundamental *fear* stemming from physical laws, such as gravity. We learn at an early age to fear falling off high places, because we know that gravity will cause us to hit the ground and be injured or even destroyed. In the same way, we ought to *fear* not listening to God and following His ways, because of the great destruction and loss we inherit as the fruit of wickedness.

The fear of the Lord is to hate evil (vs 13). *Fear* requires an element of trust ([see notes on Proverbs 1:7-9](#)). *Hate* requires a dismissal, a casting aside. So, Wisdom is trying to funnel us toward trusting (fearing) *the Lord* and hating (casting aside) the perversions of *the evil way*. In order to walk in the way of wisdom, we have to let go of the other way. We have to *hate evil*. We cannot try to live a little of each and have wisdom.

Lady Wisdom says that “*Pride and arrogance and the evil way*” (vs 13) also need to be hated. We cannot dwell in the house of wisdom and walk the path of wisdom while holding on to *arrogance and the evil way*. They are contradictory. They do not align.

The book of Habakkuk contrasts pride as the opposite of faith (Habakkuk 2:4). *Pride and arrogance* can be thought of as faith in ourselves. Faith that “we know best, apart from God.” This was the source of Adam and Eve’s fall, to seek knowledge apart from God (Genesis 3:6-7). In order to gain wisdom, we have to completely separate ourselves from the idea that “I can figure this out myself, and don’t need God.”

For good measure, she adds: “*And the perverted mouth, I hate*” (vs 13). The word *perverted* means crooked, bent, twisted from what is straight. It takes the alignment of reality and twists it. God wants us to pursue our actual best interest. Instead we twist the application to justify chasing our fleshly appetites—as if the flesh is in our best interest. We twist and pervert God’s ways. Wisdom hates this *perverted mouth*. It is incompatible with her, her message, and her outcomes.

Biblical Text

¹⁰ **Take my instruction and not silver,
And knowledge rather than choicest gold.**

¹¹ **For wisdom is better than jewels;
And all desirable things cannot compare with her.**

¹² **“I, wisdom, dwell with prudence,
And I find knowledge and discretion.**

¹³ **The fear of the Lord is to hate evil;
Pride and arrogance and the evil way
And the perverted mouth, I hate.**