

An Ornament of Grace

Proverbs 1:8-9

My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.” (Proverbs 1:8-9)

A Treasure Hunt

For a few minutes, could I interest you in a treasure hunt? You may ask, “What kind of treasure?” “How hard will it be to hunt?” or “Who is giving the clues?” Perhaps you have played the game of “warmer” and “colder.” You know, when you are getting close, the person who gives the clues will say, “You’re getting warmer, warmer ...” Or, if you are moving away from the treasure, the clue-giver will say, “You’re getting colder, colder...” The Bible does that for us. It gives us all kinds of clues as to whether we are moving toward a great treasure or a great tragedy. Everyone wants treasure, no one wants trash.

In today’s text we find that wisdom is winsome – meaning that it is attractive or appealing. Wisdom gives us all sorts of clues in delightful and memorable ways. In fact, the Book of Proverbs talks to us like the perfect parent; it uses the phrase, “my son” twenty-three times (23x). And verse 8 tells you that your parents give you clues. If you are of a certain age, you might be thinking: “My parents? What do they know?” They know more than you think. Experience has taught them a lot. More than one time, they have fallen afoul of the principle of sowing and reaping. They could tell you a lot about their mistakes so that you don’t have to make them all over again – if you will listen. We might say that they have been the “UHK” – the University of Hard Knocks. They are learning the timeless value of God’s Word to all generations. God has given you these clue-givers to help you find the treasure.

“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.” (Proverbs 1:8-9)

On this Mother’s Day, 2022, I would like to deliver a message from your mother. In other words, if your mom could stand up hear in the pulpit today and preach to you, it’s likely that the message would be similar to this. Astounding as it may seem, your mother was once the age that you are now. She’s “been there, done that.” And if you would take some time to just let her talk, and you would really listen to her, you might find some of life’s greatest treasures. She would tell you to embrace Proverbs like the perfect parent.

Think of life like an escape room with a treasure for those who escape. Escape rooms are popular activities where a group of people work together to solve clues and escape from the room in a specific time. It’s been said that B.I.B.L.E. stands for “basic instruction before leaving Earth.” So picture yourself today in an escape room while “Winsome Wisdom” gives you clues and Mother helps you understand and act on the message. “Folly the Female” is always trying to trip you up, but the wisdom of your mother can help you.

Of course, the greatest wisdom personified is in Jesus Christ. This Son of the all-wise God came to earth to be born as a man. As we studied in the last message, Jesus Christ is the meek and lowly One. By His death as our Substitute on the cross of Calvary, He paid for our sins. Then, to demonstrate his victory over death and the grave, He rose again from the dead. Those who will come to Him in meekness, mourning over their sin, will find Him to be the Redeemer of the repentant. Embrace Christ by faith – this is the most “basic instruction before leaving Earth.” During His earthly ministry, the teaching of

Jesus was full of allusions to these proverbs. And this faith leads you to follow practical wisdom. For instance, you can embrace Proverbs like the perfect parent.

Proverbs in the Context of Scripture

Hebrews 1:1-2 reminds us that God has spoken at various times and in various ways through His messengers. And most importantly, now He speaks to us through His Son. In the Old Testament, men like Moses gave us the Law. Fiery prophets such as Elijah and Jeremiah preached, “Thus says the Lord!” Samuel, who was undoubtedly a priest and a prophet, interpreted the Law in a judicial capacity. Kings generally acted in an executive capacity, learning from the prophets and the priests. Kings such as David prayerfully agonized over the Law and brought it out in heart-wrenching psalms, full of pain, passion and praise. So where do the proverbs fit in all of this? They don’t ring out like powerful Old Testament prophecies. Proverbs aren’t lengthy interpretations of the Law. Instead, they are pithy statements of principle. Proverbs are like a guide, a sage advisor, who comes along to say, “If you will open your eyes and look around, you will see what I am saying it true. So pay attention and think about my words.” Proverbs give you common sense. Wisdom and foolishness are personified, especially in the first 9 chapters of Proverbs; Wisdom is like a woman and folly is like a female. The wise woman motivates you and desires your highest and greatest success. The foolish female manipulates you and longs to trap you in her clutches. You can embrace Proverbs like the perfect parent who loves to deliver you from foolishness. If you are a parent today, think of Proverbs like the perfect grandparent who will help you to guide your own children.

What about the Treasure?

The Book of Proverbs guides you to the treasure. For instance, Proverbs 2:4 suggests that you seek something as if it were silver and search for it like hidden treasures. And there is no heartache associated with this treasure – when you get it, you will find it pleasant (2:10). That’s because it’s better than silver or gold (3:14; 8:10,19; 16:16).

So with all this searching and seeking, what will you find? Proverbs 2:4-5 puts it this way, “**If thou seek her as silver, and search for her as *for* hidden treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God**” (Proverbs 2:4-5) What was that treasure again? The fear of the Lord and the knowledge of God. Now you may ask, “Why is that thought of as a treasure?” Is it really all that valuable?

Sometimes, you just don’t recognize treasure for what it is. On June 12, 1859, six miners were searching for gold at the head of Six Mile Canyon in the Sierra Nevada range. It was slow going, and they didn’t find much gold. They just kept finding blue stuff that filled their rockers like putty. As you can well imagine, they tossed that stuff aside in their feverish search for gold. But someone got the bright idea of taking that stuff to an assayer. Imagine their surprise on June 27, 1859 when they found out that the blue putty stuff was silver – some of the purest grade of silver ever discovered.¹ And they had been throwing it out! That story illustrates that sometimes you just don’t recognize treasure for what it is. You need guidance. You need an assayer. You need someone who will guide you to learn what is trash and what is treasure. With a discerning eye, you could recognize treasure when everyone else thinks its trash. This week the story of Laura Young came out in the news. In 2018, she was rummaging around under a table in a Goodwill store in Austin, Texas. She found an old sculpture and bought it for \$34.99. She has pictures of that ancient Roman bust strapped into a seat belt for the ride home. But when Laura

Young started doing research on that sculpture, she realized that it was an ancient Roman art piece that had been stolen – probably during World War II. It was worth thousands of dollars. Proverbs could help you to have even greater discernment: you could see treasure where everyone else sees only trash. So it's time to get acquainted with the Book of Proverbs; embrace it like the perfect parent.

The Fear of the Lord

Like the ABC's

Just before our “parental” text in Proverbs 1:8-9, verse 7 tells us about a treasure: **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction”** (Proverbs 1:7). Note the contrast between those who are wise and those who despise. The fear of the Lord is “the beginning” of knowledge. The word translated “beginning” means “first, best” or “at the head place.”ⁱⁱ Think of it this way. If you go down to our bookstore after the service, you will find remarkable combinations of 26 items. There are books of missionary stories, Biblical instruction, books on stewardship, etc. But they all have these 26 things in common. What are those 26 things? They are the letters of the English alphabet. This is why every child is taught to learn “the ABC's.” Various authors have cunningly combined these letters into the warp and woof of their writings. And the end result is that we have remarkable writing that entertains and inspires us. In the same way, the fear of the Lord is “the beginning” of knowledge. We have to learn “the ABC's” – the most basic parts – in order to really understand knowledge and wisdom. The fear of the Lord does not produce a “cookie cutter conformity” – where everyone has to walk in lockstep uniformity. Far from it. The fear of the Lord – like the alphabet – can be combined in all sorts of ways with some wonderful results.

Definitions

What is “the fear of the Lord?” In his commentary on Proverbs, Charles Bridges defined it as “that affectionate reverence, by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father’s law.” The fear of the Lord has been described as the reverential awe of God that leads a believer to love and respect the Lord. It has been described as practicing the presence of God. It is an attitude and a commitment to love what God loves and hate what God hates (Proverbs 8:13). The fear of the Lord means the one is concerned about the Lord’s concerns and acts on those concerns.

Oswald Chambers made the following comment about Psalm 128:1 which says, **“Blessed is every one that fears the LORD; that walks in His ways.”** Chambers said, *“The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else.”*ⁱⁱⁱ The fear of man is a snare (Prov. 29:25), but the fear of the Lord is a treasure. Which do you choose? Isaiah 33:6 puts it this way, **“And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure.”** The wisdom of the fear of the Lord frees you from the whiplash of folly to live a life of wonderful freedom.

Why is the fear of the Lord such a blessed benefit to the believer? Consider these proverbs:

--- *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; knowing the Holy One is understanding (9:10)*

--- *The fear of the Lord will prolong your days (10:27)*

--- *In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence; it is a fountain of life (14:26-27)*

--- *The fear of the Lord is better than great treasure (15:16)*

--- *The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; by it men depart from evil. (15:33; 16:6)*

--- *The fear of the Lord leads to life and the one who has it will be satisfied (19:23)*

--- *By the fear of the Lord, you can turn away from being envious of sinners (23:17)*

Getting the Ornament of Grace

What would happen if you as a younger person would listen to your mother share the message of Proverbs? You would find them to be like an ornament of grace, like jeweled chains around your neck. Here are a few examples from the first six chapters of the Book of Proverbs

- God will pour out His Spirit to make you wise, instead of being naïve, foolish or scornful. 1:23
- You will dwell securely without dreading disasters. 1:33
- You will be delivered from the clutches of immoral people. 2:16, 5:1-23; 6:23-35
- The Lord will direct your path. 3:5-6
- You will sleep peacefully. 3:24
- You will find wisdom that adorns you like an ornament of grace. 4:7-8
- You will find the straight path in life. 4:20-27
- You will learn to be diligent. 6:6-10
- You will learn how to recognize and avoid wicked people. 6:12-19
- You will find a companion that speaks to you – waking or sleeping. 6:20-22 It will guide you, guard you and greet you when you awaken.

Applications of this message:

On this Mother's Day, 2022 would you be willing to make some commitments?

Embrace Jesus Christ by faith: The Son of God is the all-wise God, who will give you wisdom.

Read Proverbs

For the next 31 days, would you read a chapter of Proverbs? This simple commitment turned out to be one of the most important decisions I have ever made.

Meditate on Proverbs

To take advantage of the potential in Proverbs, pick one that captures your attention. Take time to ponder it – realize it and think about the ways that it applies to life. Embrace Proverbs like the perfect parent and you will find wisdom and freedom in life.

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ⁱ See Comstock Lode, Wikipedia. Accessed at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comstock_Lode

ⁱⁱ William White, "2097 שנה," ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 825.

ⁱⁱⁱ Oswald Chambers, *The Pilgrim Songbook*, 08, commenting on Psalm 128