

Proverbs 2-3 • Exhortations to Wisdom

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Proverbs chapter two. Open your Bible there, please. Proverbs chapter two. These first, actually several chapters of the book of Proverbs, are essentially the exhortation of a father to his son. And he is speaking, encouraging, challenging his young son to be wise. To gain a heart of understanding he challenges him to listen to his parents.

And now we get into chapter two we're going to hear the voice of the father as he speaks about the pursuit of wisdom. In other words, and that's an important thing to see here in these first verses of chapter two, wisdom is something that needs to be sought. And by the way, as we get into this, you're going to notice that throughout these chapters that from time to time, wisdom is personified. And it is even given a female personification, which is all fine and good.

But the point that you and I need to be aware of is that, when we get to the New Testament, wisdom is not merely a personification. It is a person. It is a legit person. And we know who that person is. Let me show you a passage from Colossians chapter two, it says,

Colossians 2:2-3 (ESV)

"...Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

When we talk about seeking wisdom, and we're going to talk about that tonight here in Proverbs chapter two, let's make no mistake about it. We're not talking about worldly wisdom. We're not talking about manmade wisdom. We're talking about Jesus. Jesus is our wisdom. We're talking about seeking a person, knowing Him. Knowing Him through His word. Having His wisdom in our lives.

I want you to notice as we begin to read these opening verses of Proverbs chapter two, you're going to notice that we're going to run into a lot of action words and action phrases. Read along with me or follow along, I should say, as I read. It says,

"1 My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments within you,

2 making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding:

3 yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding,

4 if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures,

5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God."(ESV)

As I read these first opening verses, if there's one word that kind of emerges, not from the text, but from what the text is saying, it has to be the word, "effort." Right? I mean, look at these first few verses. If you "receive." That's an action. To receive something is to take action. Because somebody can say something to me and rather than receiving it, I can refuse it.

Kind of like when you get a package in the mail, and you decide you don't want to pay for it, or you want to send it back. You just write "refuse" on it, and you haven't received that package. You've sent it back. You can do the same thing with the Word of God. You can do the same thing with the wisdom of God. You can just write on that and say, "refused."

He says, "...son, if you receive..." And then he goes on to say, "*treasure up my commandments...*" What does it mean to treasure up the commandments of God? Look at the next one in verse two, "*making your ear attentive...*" In other words, the act of listening. The act of truly opening your heart to listen to what God is saying to you. Hopefully, when we get together and we do the Word of God here on Sundays and Wednesdays, your hearts are making your ear attentive.

And then, this goes along with it, also in verse two; "*inclining your heart to understanding,...*" Directing your heart to be a receptacle of what the Word of God is saying.

He says in verse three, "*if you call out for insight,...*" And that means that there, as part of this search effort, there's the actual verbalizing, "God, give me wisdom; I call to you. I need your wisdom." James tells us "if any man lacks wisdom, let him ask. God gives freely, abundantly, generously, without finding fault." (James 1:5-7) So we're to call out. And he says, and this is kind of a

poetic element of Hebrew poetry, if you *"raise your voice for understanding,"* which is really kind of the same thing. But it's a, it's another way of saying there's this effort that you're putting forth.

Verse four, "if you seek it." Now, he doesn't just say seek it. I like this, *"if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures,..."* (ESV) That's the key. Now, you might say, eh, silver hidden treasures. What's that all about? I mean, is that really applicable to us today? It's really the same way of just saying, if you do it, if you look for wisdom like you would put in the effort to make money to gain wealth for yourself, if you put that kind of effort, imagine.

Have you ever met a workaholic? Maybe you are one. Imagine somebody putting that level of effort into seeking the wisdom of God through His Word. Through knowing the person of Jesus Christ. Imagine what kind of wisdom that person would have.

Now they may get money by putting in the effort toward some sort of a business pursuit, but isn't wisdom better? And that's why he says if you seek for it as you would and search for it as you would for treasures in this life.

Look at verse five, *"then you will understand the fear of the Lord and (you'll) find the knowledge of God."* (ESV)

How can the writer of Proverbs be so confident? Because this is completely in line with God's Word, isn't it? If you knock, the door will be opened. If you seek, you're going to find. Right? (Matthew 7:7) God is ready and willing to respond to our effort. That's the part that we need to remember. God wants to pour out His wisdom on you and I more than we want to receive it. All this is about effort.

Now I want to be careful here because on the one hand, wisdom is a gift. And usually when it comes to gifts, you don't have to make effort to get them. But this is a gift that doesn't just come to anybody. It comes to those who pursue it. Really it's just like the gift of salvation. The gift of salvation doesn't come to everybody. It comes to those who receive it. It says to all who received Him, to those who believed on His name. Well, with wisdom it's to those who did these things: put in the effort; sought wisdom. It obviously isn't going to come to those who are living a foolish life and don't care anything about wisdom.

Now, verse six is important as we go on and read, *"6 For the Lord gives wisdom; And from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;"* (ESV)

Even though wisdom may be personified in the Proverbs, even with a female sort of personification, we know that ultimately God is the source of wisdom as we saw in Colossians chapter two on the screen a moment ago.

The Lord gives wisdom. "From His mouth come knowledge and understanding." Guys, *"the Lord gives wisdom."* By the way, the difference between wisdom and knowledge, okay, knowledge obviously is part of knowing. To know something is to have information. Wisdom is to know how to apply that knowledge. Wisdom is the application of knowledge.

When I was in high school, I got really interested in cars, and I was usually more interested in the ones that went the fastest. My friends and I talked a lot about cars, and we talked a lot about fast cars. And we even talked a lot about how to make them faster. Well, in order to do that, you got to kind of know a little bit about motors. And I'm not really kind of geared that way, no pun intended, but I hung around with guys who kind of were.

A lot of my friends were actually very good mechanically with cars. And I learned a lot in terms of the knowledge or the understanding of how an engine works. And how you can make it go faster and so forth. So, I learned a lot. In fact, I think I've got a pretty good knowledge of a gasoline combustion engine. And I have absolutely no wisdom. I mean, I cannot apply that knowledge at all. My mechanical prowess is zilch when it comes to motors, engines, that sort of thing. I just can't do it. I make things worse than they are.

Do you understand the difference? You can know something, but not know how to apply or to do. Okay. Knowledge, again, is knowing something. Wisdom is applying that knowledge. All right?

When you think about the fact that verse six tells us the Lord gives wisdom and from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding, what does that tell you about a world that has rejected the Lord? It tells you that it's going to become foolish, doesn't it? It tells you that you can expect as a culture, as a society, moves farther away from God, it's going to become foolish.

And in fact, that is exactly what the Apostle Paul says. Let me show you a passage from the book of Romans. This is an important passage.

Romans 1:21-22 (ESV)

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became, in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Claiming to be wise futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools..."

For although (it says,) they knew God, (and this speaks basically of unbelievers, those that deny the Lord. It says), they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became (look at this) futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise (in other words, claiming to have wisdom) they (actually) became fools.

They claimed to know, and they claimed to know how to apply. But the fact is, they didn't because they had rejected the source of all wisdom and knowledge. That's such an important sort of a balance for you and I to understand. God is the one who gives wisdom. God gives wisdom; from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding. Okay. Very important.

Look at verse seven goes on to say. It even goes on to say,

"7 he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;" (ESV)

Isn't that wonderful? *"he stores up sound wisdom for the upright."* And what that means you guys is that when we come to Him and we say, "Lord, I need wisdom for this situation," He says, "You know what, I've been storing that up for you. Let me go get that for you right straight over here. I've been saving that for you."

Have you ever prayed and asked God for wisdom on something that you had absolutely no idea how to deal with, and God just dropped the blessing of His stored up wisdom in your lap? And you were just kind of like, of course! It's happened to me a few times. It's happened when we were a lot younger and raising little kids, and we didn't know how to respond to our children's misbehavior. And it's happened a million times pastoring this church because I regularly don't have a clue about what I'm doing and need to go to God for wisdom.

He's so gracious to store it up. If we will but make the effort to search it out. Right? Don't become hopeless. The God who you know, the God to whom you belong, is the wellspring of all knowledge and wisdom. All understanding. Go to Him. He wants to give you insight and understanding. He wants to give you wisdom. He stores it up.

Notice what also this wisdom is for you and I. It says, *"he is a shield to those who walk in integrity."* (ESV) So His wisdom in our lives becomes a process by

which we are able to deflect junk that comes our way that would otherwise hurt us. He says,

"guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints." (That's what wisdom does in our lives when we apply it.)

9 Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, (which is fairness and) every good path;

10 for wisdom will come into your heart, knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;

11 discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you,

12 delivering you from the way of evil, from men of perverted (or twisted) speech,

13 who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness,

14 who (actually) rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil,

15 men whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways."(ESV)

Wisdom is here to protect us. Wisdom is here to fill our hearts with the heart of prudence to say, you know what that would really be dumb. That would really be stupid if I took that path. That would be dangerous. That would be harmful. Wisdom says that it counsels us. It keeps us from going on that path.

And guys you know also that when we get into the New Testament, and we begin to understand the gifts of the Holy Spirit as they are outlined for us in 1 Corinthians, there are actual spiritual gifts of knowledge and wisdom. Now, these aren't necessarily the same. I mean, knowledge is knowledge and wisdom is wisdom, but these spiritual gifts are words of wisdom and words of knowledge. And they are usually given in a prophetic sort of a sense to an individual, to alert them of maybe impending danger or a situation for which they aren't sure how to react or respond.

And we have instances of words of knowledge in the Bible when Peter went up to go see how all that was going on among the Samaritans, when Philip went up there and began to evangelize the Samaritans. People were coming to the Lord in droves (Acts 8:4-40)

And you'll remember there was a man up there who used to kind of impress the people with his magic tricks. And he heard the gospel and he got saved, it says he believed. And the word, believed, is the same word that's spoken of anybody else that got saved. So, this man became a believer but yet his mind had not yet been sanctified. Right? He had not yet surrendered every aspect of his heart to the Lord.

And he actually came up to Peter, you'll remember, and offered him money for the Holy Spirit, for the power of the Holy Spirit. Because he saw what happened when the apostles laid their hands on people to receive the empowering work of the Holy Spirit. And he was impressed by that. And he thought, man, I want to do that.

He said he literally got out his money belt and said here's some money, give me that power. Remember what Peter said to him? He said, first of all he rebuked him soundly, he said, may your money perish with you for thinking you could buy the power of the Holy Spirit with money. But then Peter went on to speak a word of knowledge through the Spirit. He said, for I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.

There was still a captivity in his life that was affecting and influencing his heart. But Peter recognized that through the spiritual gift of a word of knowledge. The Holy Spirit just spoke through him at that time to give him specific insight into things that he could not have known otherwise.

Our God being the source of wisdom, the source of knowledge, is so powerful working through us, in us, as we seek Him, as we seek to know His wisdom and knowledge. That's one thing. But then there's those spiritual gifts that as we're open, God just drops it in your heart. Now, a word of wisdom would be a directive for someone. Right? Maybe the Lord has spoken to someone about giving them a piece of information, but they don't really know what to do with it.

Somebody comes along and gives them a word of knowledge. The Lord would say to you, now is the time. Take this, this, this and go there, sort of a thing. That's a word of wisdom. Applying the knowledge. Wisdom usually is about doing. Knowledge is about knowing.

Notice what else wisdom does. And remember here, this is an exhortation to a young man. He says,

"16 So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman. (ESV) In other words, if you embrace wisdom, embrace knowledge, okay, from the adulteress, with her smooth words. If this were written to a woman, it could just as easily say you will be delivered from the influence of an immoral man.

But it speaks in verse seven, or excuse me, 17, this is interesting. This immoral woman is described as one,

"17 who forsakes the companion of her youth, (that's her husband) and forgets the covenant of her God;"(ESV)

And that speaks of the marriage covenant. So, she forgets, she betrays her husband, and she forsakes or forgets the covenant that she made before God in her marriage.

Verse 18,

"18 for her house sinks down to death, and her paths to the departed;

19 none who go to her come back, nor do they regain the paths of life,"(ESV)

Now, I want to have you stop there for just a moment. Because you read these couple of verses and it seems as though that they are suggesting that if a man chooses to give in to an immoral woman, or a woman to an immoral man, that these verses seem to suggest that there's no path for recovery.

But I need you to understand that many of the statements that are made in the Bible are given as a general rule. And that doesn't mean they're any less true. But there's statements that are given as a general rule but generally do not take into consideration other aspects. They just make a statement. And this one is not taking into consideration repentance, grace, and mercy. And of course, we've seen many, many, many people, and we've seen it in the Bible, where people have lived lives that are very immoral. And yet, they have repented of that lifestyle, come to Jesus, found forgiveness at the foot of the cross, and gone on to be very productive and very fruitful in the kingdom of God.

We understand Biblically, we understand experientially that where grace, or excuse me, where sin abounds, grace much more abounds. (Romans 5:20) We get that. But the general rule is given to us in the Proverbs to kind of underscore the severity and the danger that is associated with giving into sexual immorality.

And when a father is referencing this sort of thing with his son, he's not going to talk about grace and mercy. When a father is warning his son about "don't go there," he's not going to say, but if you do there's always God's grace and forgiveness. No, you're just going to talk about, "Hey, son, listen to me. This is serious stuff. You go down that path and that is the path of death right there." That's the way a father is going to convey it, is what you expect a father to say. He's not going to want to try to give his son any loopholes that he can possibly use, or think that, well if I do that, it's really not that big of a deal because isn't God in the forgiving business?

I've had people say that to me when confronted with sin. Well, God's just going to have to forgive me. It's kind of like...wooo! Wow.

Verse 20,

"20 So you will walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous.

21 For the upright will inhabit the land, and those with integrity will remain in it,

22 but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it."(ESV)

Now again, general rule. Now you and I haven't even been given land specifically to be kept in. But the idea here in verse 21, when he's saying that, "those with integrity and wisdom will remain in the land." It's a general rule, but it doesn't mean that it's a promise in every instance.

Daniel was a man of great wisdom and he got taken into exile along with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. (Old Testament book of Daniel) Ezekiel was a godly man, a man of godly wisdom and integrity, and he got taken into exile. In fact, he was the prophet to the exiles. (Old Testament book of Ezekiel)

There's not a hard and fast sort of an "if you have wisdom in your life nothing will ever go wrong, and you'll always live in your same house, you'll never move." I don't know if that's wisdom or not, but sort of a thing, "you'll never be uprooted." That doesn't necessarily mean that. It's saying, by a general rule, you're not going to invite the kind of disaster, the kind of difficulty that bad choices bring into your life that keep you from being able to live somewhere as safely and securely as you would otherwise want to. That's the point. Okay?

Alright. Chapter three. We move on. He says,

"1 My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments,

2 for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. (Again, general rule.)

3 Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.

4 So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man." (ESV) I want you to stop there. I think this is one of the most powerful pieces of wisdom that you can give a young person. Be faithful. Be faithful.

Oh, I wish they would have pounded that in my head when I was a kid. Be faithful. At work be faithful. With your friends be faithful. In ministry be faithful. Just be faithful.

Now it says here that if you do, you're going to find favor and good success. We know this as sowing and reaping. You sow the seeds of faithfulness, you're going to reap faithfulness, right? You sow steadfast love, you're going to reap steadfast love. And that's essentially what is being said here. But this is wisdom.

It's wisdom to know that there is a process that God has established in this world that we call sowing and reaping. Or, if you will, cause and effect. So that the things that you do in your life are going to come back to you. And that can be negative and that can be positive. Right? So, it's just an important thing to remember. It's wisdom to remember it. And that's why he's exhorting his son. Son, be faithful. Don't let faithfulness leave you. Don't let faithfulness out of your sight. Right?

Verse five. I'm sure you guys have never seen this verse before,

"5 Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." (ESV)

What you see we're taking this in the context. This is wisdom, you guys. It's smart to trust in God with all of your heart. It's wise. Wise people trust in God with all of their heart. Wise people don't lean on their own understanding.

You would think that the more you know and the wiser you are, the more you would lean upon your knowledge and wisdom. It's actually just the opposite. The wiser you are, the more knowledgeable you are, the more you understand your fallibility. And you're prone, how prone you are to making mistakes. How prone you are to temptations and things that lure you off base and so forth.

He says, it's wisdom, my son, to trust in God. It's wisdom, my son, not to trust in yourself and your own ability to think through a problem. He says, rather than trying to think through your problem, acknowledge God in your problem. He says, acknowledge Him in all of your ways.

You got a problem? You got an issue? You got a concern? You got something going on that you can't figure out? Acknowledge God in the midst of it. What is it? God, I acknowledge you in the midst of this situation. I acknowledge you. I acknowledge your presence. I acknowledge your sovereignty. I acknowledge your power. I acknowledge your wisdom. Right? I acknowledge you.

What does it mean to acknowledge? To recognize God in the midst of. To acknowledge a person when they come into the room is to recognize that person in the midst of the room. I acknowledge somebody by looking at them and saying "good morning" or "good evening" or whatever the case might be. That's a simple acknowledgement.

Acknowledge the Lord in all of your ways, in everywhere you go, in everything you do, in every problem that you are faced with, acknowledge the Lord. You're not alone. Acknowledge that He's there too.

Isn't that funny? Have you ever walked in a room and somebody ignored you? Isn't it funny that we can do that to God? He's right there, wants to help us, wants to come alongside us in the midst of our issues, and we don't even acknowledge Him. We're just kind of doing our little problem thing. And we're trying to solve it with our own understanding. Now, what am I going to do? And God's just kind of sitting there. (Pastor Paul whistles arms folded as a person in waiting) He's like, yeah, I'm just kind of waiting for you to acknowledge Me here. I'm here. I'm here to help. Acknowledge the Lord in all of your ways. Right? Trust in Him with all of your heart.

Look at verse seven,

"7 Be not wise in your own eyes;" (Okay? I don't care if you've even gained a heart of wisdom. Still don't be wise in your own eyes because that's pride. But) *"fear the Lord, and turn away from evil."* (ESV) (You know that being wise in my own eyes is considered evil.)

And look at the verse eight,

"8 It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones." (ESV)

This is really interesting. Fearing the Lord turning away from evil; trusting in God with all of my heart; leaning not upon my own understanding; acknowledging Him, saying, "Lord, I'm not big enough, I'm not strong enough, I'm not capable enough to handle this thing. But You are. I'm so thankful that You are." Right? You know what he says? It's actually going to be "healing to your flesh, and refreshing to your bones."

I don't think anybody in this room would deny the fact, the medical fact, that worry and fretting has a very negative physiological effect on our bodies. We can make ourselves physically ill by worrying, fretting. Well, what happens when you do the opposite? What happens when you trust the Lord with all of your heart? What happens when you lean not upon your own understanding? What happens when you begin to acknowledge the Lord in all of your ways; when you're not wise in your own eyes? When you turn away from all the things that the world tells you to do. And you begin to trust God, and you begin to open your heart to His purpose plan, His wisdom, His knowledge. There's actually a healing effect. There's a healing effect. It's wisdom to do that.

Verse nine. Here's another piece of wisdom,

"9 Honor the Lord with your wealth." (ESV) Why? It's not yours. That's the bottom line. I kind of threw that in there, but the fact of the matter is, for Christians, it's not yours. It doesn't belong to you. He bought you - body, soul, and spirit. The Bible says you are not your own. You've been bought with a price. Okay! That's New Testament truth for you and I as Christians. You are not your own. You have been bought with a price.

You think that doesn't include your resources, your money? Of course it does. It includes all that stuff. It's not yours. So, honor the Lord with it. Honor Him as the one who gave it. Honor Him as the source. It is God who gives a man the ability to earn wealth according to the Scripture. So, honor Him.

How do I do that? How do I honor Him? Well, here's one way, *"...with the firstfruits of all your produce;*

10 then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine." (ESV)

Now, again, we're just talking about sowing and reaping. We're talking about not letting money and wealth and possessions become so gripping in our lives that we hold on to them with kind of a white knuckle approach. But we have an open-handed approach rather about those things we're willing to share. And we're willing to give the firstfruits of those things to the Lord who gave them in the first place.

By the way, that's not law. In the New Testament, that's not law as far as our giving goes. What is the New Testament idea of giving? "Let every man give as he is led in his own heart." Right? (2 Corinthians 9:7) We're to be led by the Holy Spirit. Your heart is to direct you obviously governed by the Holy Spirit. And you're to give generously without compulsion or whatever. You're to give in a cheerful sort of a way. That's New Testament giving.

The point is honor the Lord with your wealth. Find a way to honor God with the things that He's given to you because He didn't just give them to you for you. Right? So, honor the Lord.

Verse 11,

"11 My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof,

12 for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights." (ESV)

By the way, this is also quoted as I'm sure you know, in the New Testament, in Hebrews chapter 12. (Hebrews 12:5-9) The writer of Hebrews quotes this very passage and reminds the people to whom he is writing that when we go through difficult seasons of life, we're to understand that the Lord is disciplining us, He's training us and it is wisdom not to despise it. Why? Because the moment that you and I begin to despise the difficult seasons of life, we crack open the door to bitterness and anger.

I was talking to a brother not that long ago who said, I just got angry at God. He said, isn't that dumb? I said, yeah, actually, yes, because it's just not wise. We are to look at the difficulties of this life, and this life is chock full of them, we're

to look at them as the discipline of the Lord. James tells us to consider all hardship as discipline. Right? (James 1:2) Don't get weary of His reproof. I know it can be very wearying, but it's just a sign of His love for you.

Verse 13,

"¹³ Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding,

¹⁴ for the gain from her (now we're back to that female personification, That, he says, for the gain from her) is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. (or the stock market.)

¹⁵ She is more precious than jewels, ...nothing (on this earth that) you (could possibly) desire can compare with (getting wisdom in your life.) (correction-compare with her.)

¹⁶ Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor.

¹⁷ Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed." (ESV)

And this is a way for the writer of Proverbs to say that living the life of wisdom has great benefits and fruitfulness in the kingdom of God. Doesn't mean life's going to be perfect. Doesn't mean you're never going to have problems. Doesn't mean you're never going to have challenges.

And then we're told in verse 19,

"¹⁹ The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens;

²⁰ by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew." (ESV)

But there's so much just in those two verses, "by wisdom He founded the earth." The more we learn about this earth, the more we know about the establishment of the heavens, the heavens and how they operate, it's incredible. It's mind boggling.

What's mind boggling is that you can look at all of the things concerning, for example, just the planet earth, the things that are perfectly aligned so that this planet can sustain life. And you can say that- that happened by accident. That is mind boggling. Because the Bible says here that it was through God's wisdom and understanding that He established these things, the perfection of them. All of it. It's just really incredible.

He says in verse 21,

"21 My son, do not lose sight of these-- keep sound wisdom and discretion,"
(ESV)

There's a good word to kind of think about for a moment, the word "discretion." I looked up the definition of this in my Hebrew dictionary. And I found out that this word that is translated "discretion" comes from a root word that means "to consider." And that kind of gives you a good insight into the definition or the meaning of this word.

Discretion is the "ability to choose and to consider the best response to a given situation." That's good discretion. We say he used the best discretion when dealing with that problem, or in talking with that angry person, he used discretion. As he was sharing information about a very sensitive issue, he used discretion as far as what to say. It was the ability to understand, to know what's best. So, he says, "don't lose sight of these."

Verse 22,

"22 (for) ...they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck.

23 (And) Then you will walk on your way securely, and your foot will not stumble.

24 If you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet." (ESV)

Again, these are not promises. They're general statements of observation. Solomon isn't saying here that if you apply wisdom, you'll never ever have a sleepless night. That's not what he's saying. He's saying, and this is really the point, if you're applying wisdom in your life and you're trusting the Lord, you're not going to be up at night worrying and fretting because of your poor decisions and the decisions that you made because you were influenced in a worldly or fleshly sort of a way, which are only going to come back to haunt you. And

those are the things that often keep us up at night. And there's something else, fear doesn't have to become such a major part of our lives.

Verse 25,

"25 Do not be afraid of sudden terror or of the ruin of the wicked, (or the ruin that befalls the wicked) when it comes,

26 for the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught." (ESV)

In other words, the application of wisdom mitigates disaster. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid of sudden failure and disaster when you've done things God's way. That you've done things God's way, and you can say, Lord, this is the way you directed. I mean, if it goes away, it goes away at your direction, not mine. I'm not going to fret about it.

Verse 27,

"27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.

28 (Don't) say to your neighbor, "Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it" - when you have it with you." (ESV)

In other words, it's not wise to withhold good when it's in your power to bestow it. Why? Because God promises a blessing to those who pour out goodness. And you're only going to make your neighbor mad and create issues for yourself because you didn't act wisely. You acted selfishly or you didn't want to be inconvenienced or whatever.

Verse 29,

"29 Do not plan evil against your neighbor, who dwells trustingly beside you.

30 Do not contend with a man for no reason, when he has done you no harm." (ESV)

And I, when I see that verse I think, don't get involved in other people's squabbles. Don't contend with somebody when he hasn't done you any harm.

One of the dumbest things we do, I mean, seriously, this is very unwise, is when we take on someone else's offense and we start fighting their battle for them. They tell us they've got an issue with somebody, and instead of applying any kind of Biblical sorts of guidelines about, hey, well, you need to go to your brother and work this thing out, we just like, you're kidding me, he did what? I don't believe it!

And then we're getting all upset and we're telling other people you're not going to believe what this...and all we're doing is we're operating on one person's side of the story. That's not wise. In fact, that is very foolish. So don't contend with a man who's done you no harm. I think that's a very important thing to remember.

Verse 31,

"³¹ Do not envy a man of violence and do not choose any of his ways, (because he has ways of getting things done.)

³² for the devious person is an abomination to the Lord, but the upright are in his confidence." (ESV) (The Lord speaks to those who are upright.)

And then the last three verses of the chapter,

"³³ The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the dwelling of the righteous.

³⁴ Toward the scorners he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor.

³⁵ The wise will inherit honor, but fools get disgrace." (ESV)