

RELIGION

Seek the wisdom of God in your life

Proverbs 2:1-5; 3:1-6, 13-18

It is easy for us to confuse "wisdom" and "knowledge." Obviously, knowledge can be acquired through education or experience. However, wisdom is not as easily obtained. The psalmist of old declared, "The fear (reverence) of the Lord (Jehovah) is the beginning (first in time, place, rank, order) of wisdom (skill in an art; dexterity); a good understanding (intelligence; success) have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever." Psalm 111:10. Solomon (Proverbs 1:1), declared, "The fear (reverence) of the Lord (Jehovah) is the beginning (opening; commencement) of wisdom: and the knowledge (implies knowing by experience) of the holy (Holy One; sacred; free from defilement) is understanding (intelligence; faculty for insight)." Proverbs 9:10.

It is obvious that no person is born with "knowledge" nor "wisdom." These attributes must be received from the "past generations," and accepted from those to whom they have been entrusted. The book of Proverbs allows each generation to "glean" wisdom and knowledge that can be applied in everyday life. It

has been said that "no person can live long enough to make all possible mistakes." Thus, we need to learn from the past.

Solomon — the wisest man who ever lived (I Kings 3:11, 12) — appealed to his "son" as he wrote. "My son, if (conditional; 'O that') thou wilt receive (to take that which is given) my words (what is said), and hide (conceal in order to protect) my commandments (charges) with thee; So that thou incline thine ear (i.e., to prick up the ears; dispose the ear or mind) unto wisdom, and apply (turn aside) thine heart (fountain of life) to understanding (reason; discretion); Yea, if thou criest (to call out) after knowledge (from a word that means 'discern'), and liftest up (i.e. give up) thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest (strive after) her as silver (indicates 'money'), and searchest (dig; inquire after) for her as for hid treasures (secret storehouses); Then shalt thou understand the fear (reverence) of the Lord (Jehovah), and find (come to; arrive at) the knowledge (to know by experience) of God (Elohim: God as sovereign; Creator; all knowing)." Proverbs 2:1-5.

As the king of old continued to give instruction to

Sunday School Lesson



Rev. James Temples

his son, he showed the young one his personal responsibility. "My son, forget not (i.e., mislay; leave something) my law (statutes; precepts); but let thine heart keep (i.e., keep in a safe place) my commandments (to enjoin): For length of (i.e., to prolong) days (time), and long life, and peace (health; concord; friendship), shall they add (increase) to thee." Proverbs 3:1, 2.

Not only was it necessary for this "son" of old to "allow" certain things to be accomplished in his life, but, we, too, must listen to the instruction from the past. "Let not mercy (grace; favor) and truth (firmness; faithfulness) forsake (to leave in a destitute condition) thee..." Proverbs 3:3a. There is personal responsibility — "bind (tie) them about (upon) thy neck (throat): write them upon the table (a tablet for writing) of thine heart (fountain of life)..." Proverbs 3:3b. There is a "positive result" in the life of the obe-

dient one — "So shalt thou find (come to; reach; attain) favor (grace; goodness) and good (agreeable; desirable) understanding (wisdom; intelligence) in the sight (i.e., the eyes) of God and man (humans)." Proverbs 3:4.

Solomon knew that the time would come when the "total responsibility" would fall on to the shoulders of this son. Thus, what was the young one to do? The instruction to this unknown one is important for all of us, today. "Trust (place hope and confidence) in the Lord (Jehovah: the I am) with all (the whole of) thine heart: and lean (rest upon; rely upon) not unto thine own understanding (faculty for insight)." Proverbs 3:5.

Assurance is given to those who will follow the divinely-given (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16) instruction. "In all (the whole of) thy ways (course of life) acknowledge (see; perceive; know) him (i.e., the Lord; Jehovah), and he shall direct (to show; point out) thy paths (road; footpath)." Proverbs 3:6. All areas of life are subject to the divine plan. Proverbs 3:11, 12. The assurance that the king gave his unnamed son reaches to all generations.

"Wisdom" is a quality

that is seen as a rare treasure. "Happy (the word carries the force of an interjection) is the man (human) that findeth (come to; attain; reach) wisdom, and the man that getteth (draw out; obtain) understanding (reason; discretion)." Proverbs 3:13. Since Solomon knew the influence of riches and all kinds of possessions, he could make an accurate assessment. "For the merchandise (trading; profit) of it (i.e., wisdom) is better than (i.e., pleasant; desirable; agreeable) the merchandise of silver (used as money), and the gain thereof than fine gold (i.e., the metal)." Proverbs 3:14.

The king continued to speak of the "value" of wisdom. "She is more precious (to make rare or costly) than rubies (the gem): and all the things thou canst desire (delight in; from the word 'to bend', 'to bend towards') are not to be compared (to resemble) unto her." Proverbs 3:15.

The son of David described the "benefits" of wisdom. "Length of (prolong; continuance) of days (used of 'time' in general) is in her right hand (seen as the hand of strength); and in her left hand (seen as the 'supportive hand') riches (wealth) and honour (to be weighty, i.e., influential).

Her ways (path in which one goes) of pleasantness (suitableness; delight; from the word for 'beauty'), and all her paths (trodden way; beaten path) are peace (safe; happy; friendly; 'Shalom')." Proverbs 3:16, 17.

Solomon stated a principle — and fact — that should be appreciated by every person. "She (i.e., wisdom) is a tree (used as a figure of speech) of life (having vital energy) to them that lay hold upon (i.e., to bind to oneself) her: and happy is every one that retaineth (hold to; acquire) her." Proverbs 3:18.

As one reads of and considers the need for this quality, the question might arise, "Where can I get this wisdom, if it must be acquired?" A study of scripture gives the answer to this inquiry. "If (conditional) any of you lack (to leave; left behind) wisdom (ability to discern inner qualities and relationships), let him ask (to make a request) of God, that (who) giveth (bestows) to all men liberally (freely; with singleness of heart), and upbraideth (reproach) not; and it shall be given (granted) him." James 1:5. Relying on Jesus Christ can provide for each of us. 1 Corinthians 1:30a. We can claim these promises. James 1:17.

Embrace a new covenant with God today

The modern church chooses to use inadequate words about God. Words reflect opinions and attitudes. So if our words are not biblical, our opinions and attitudes about God may not be biblical, either.

A catch phrase of our time is "personal relationship." Now I know some of you mean well when you say you have a "personal relationship" with the Lord. If this means that you have personally repented of your sin and put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord, that you spend time with him personally each day reading his word and seeking his face and doing his will, then you are doing well, very well.

But let me tell you what "personal relationship" has come to mean to most modern church members: I have a "personal relationship" with Jesus Christ since I asked him into my heart to be my personal Savior. I personally decide whether I will attend Sunday worship, or not, and usually I'm too busy to go. I personally decide which of God's commandments I will keep and the ones I won't. I personally determine whether I will live like the people of this present world, or act like some of those outdated people in the Bible, and since I live in this world I've personally chosen just to go with the flow. In the end it will all work out, because Jesus is my personal savior and I have a personal relationship with God. Is such a person personally

saved? Will this kind of a "personal relationship" take you to heaven? Can you sense the danger of having this kind of "personal relationship" with God?

Jeremiah certainly could. He lived among a people who thought they had a personal relationship with God, simply because they were Jews living in Israel. They came to the temple to worship sporadically and superficially. They ignored God's word and refused to listen to God's prophets. Their lifestyles were not remarkably different from the people around them, people who claimed no relationship with God at all. Jeremiah told them, in so many words, that what they needed was not a relationship, but a new covenant. Read Jeremiah 31:31-34.

The term "relationship" does not even appear once in holy scripture. The word "covenant" does, about 300 times. There is a danger in having a mere "personal relationship" with God. However, there is salvation and security in enjoying a new "covenant" with him.

God's new covenant is much better than a relationship.

It's even better than the old covenant. That's because Israel had treated the old covenant like a personal relationship. Eventually it had failed like a bad marriage.

Relationships are all too often based on personal emotion and enrichment. We jump in when we feel something for someone. We

The Gospel Truth



Dr. Charles I. DeVane Jr.
First Baptist Church

jump in when we feel like we are getting something from someone. Then when these feelings fade, we jump out. There goes the relationship.

Old Testament Jews all too often treated the old covenant like a modern relationship. They were attracted by the promise that, if they would keep God's commandments, they would be personally enriched. They soon discovered, however, that many could get rich without God. The ease and pleasure of things they could see began to seem much better than walking the straight and narrow with a God they could not see.

New Testament Christians, or at least many professing Christians, treat the Lord in the same way. They hear the gospel, fear hell, and want the benefits of a place called heaven. Sooner than later, though, the call of the wild and the lures of the world seem better than Bibles, hymn books, and stuffy old church. They maintain their "personal relationship," but in reality there is only a broken covenant.

God offers something better than a relationship based on emotion and tem-

porary enrichment. He has made a new covenant based on sacrifice and total commitment. Romans 8:3; John 3:16.

He is offering an everlasting covenant. It is based on the sacrifice of his son, Jesus Christ. It required total commitment to give and it requires total commitment to receive. But if you accept God's covenant on God's terms, you have something infinitely better than a mere relationship.

So how do you know if you have this new covenant?

God's new covenant is much stronger than a relationship.

Relationships are bound by two human wills. They can be strong and they can be severed. It's really up to us.

That's why people who claim a "personal relationship" with Jesus sometimes make it and sometimes don't. Sometimes they are genuinely sincere. Often the emotion fades, the disciplines and attention to worship wear off, and the seed proves to have fallen on bad soil. A "personal relationship" that does not continually seek corporate worship, accountable discipleship, ministry to others, and holiness of life is not very strong, is it?

God's salvation covenant is infinitely stronger. That is because it does not depend upon our will, but God's will. Notice how many times God says "I will" in

this text (vs. 31, 33, 33, 33, 33, 34, 34). God will because man will not. Romans 3:10-12.

We are not capable of initiating and maintaining a relationship with God, so God has reached out to us and offered a better, stronger covenant. It is based on the person and work of his son, and applied by the person and work of his spirit. In salvation God comes to man and stops him in his sinful tracks, brings the gospel message to him, and transplants a new heart within him written with God's love and God's laws. You can know you have God's love if you love God's laws (John 14:15).

This is why the gospel should be ministered without manipulation and accepted without reservation. It proves the covenant to be stronger than any mere relationship. When superficial methods make a person profess faith in Christ, a struggle ensues to get them to stay in church and stay in line. But when God saves someone with his new covenant, you don't have to tell them or beg them or trick them to worship the Lord and obey the Bible. For this is written in their hearts. They need teaching and discipleship to grow, but no one has to teach them to love, worship, and obey the Lord. They do so, supernaturally.

This is because God's covenant of grace is better

and God's covenant of love is stronger than any personal relationship on earth. And there's one other thing, too.

God's new covenant is more valuable than a relationship.

God's new covenant is not only better, not only stronger, but it is much more valuable than any relationship. It is bought by the son, brought by the spirit, and honored by God the Father. Just look at this text and see what God gives to those who accept his new covenant.

In the new covenant, God gives something no amount of pleasure is worth and no amount of money can buy. Maybe money can buy some happiness. Maybe money can maintain some relationships. Maybe money can buy some kinds of love, usually the wrong kind. But money cannot buy covenant love, because money cannot buy forgiveness.

I dare say that forgiveness is that pearl of great price (Matthew 13:46). It is the one thing you do not want to leave earth without. It was pictured throughout the Old Testament by the shedding of the blood of animals, and it was accomplished in the New Testament by the shedding

See TRUTH on page 19

Christ offers contentment

Anxiety and fear is something that is common to all people. The world today is in a hurry. We have often seen this fast pace and wonder whether we are even going to make another day. We become anxious about life and fear holds us back from doing what we ought to do.

We need to learn to be happy and the Bible shows us the way to be happy. "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in

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all things I am instructed both to abound and to suffer need." "I can do all things through Christ which strengthenth me." (Phil. 4: 11-13). Paul was content but that does not mean the problems went away in his life (2 Cor. 12: 7-10). Paul could be content because Christ Jesus gave him strength, courage, and hope

to continue on even in the face of adversity.

Friends, Christ does give those who belong to Him strength to cope with the anxieties of life. Please obey the gospel in order for you to possess all the spiritual blessings Christ offers (Eph. 1: 3). He gives a wonderful invitation to come to Him when we are burdened and fearful (Matt. 11: 28-30). Obey the Lord by hearing, believing, repenting of your sins, confessing Jesus as God's Son, and being baptized for the remission of sins (Rom. 10: 17, Heb. 11: 6, Luke 13: 3-5, Rom. 10: 9-10, Acts 2: 36-47).

CHURCH NEWS

Arlington Baptist

The Arlington Baptist Church sanctuary choir will present a repeat performance of their Easter cantata, "Eyes of Faith," Sunday evening, May 7, at 6 p.m. Everyone is invited to come and be blessed by this very moving presentation.

St. Mary M. B.

St. Mary Missionary Baptist Church will have their annual missionary program May 7, at 3 p.m. The speakers will be minister Perez Blackmon and Rev. Edward Williams pastor. Everyone is invited to attend.

Shiloh Missionary Church

Shiloh Missionary Church, located on Chancey

Mill Road will be having family and friends day Sunday, May 7 at 11 a.m. Everyone is invited to attend. Rev. K. Marshall, pastor

Willis Grove

Community Church Willis Grove Community Church will have their annual revival May 8 - 12 at 7:30 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend.

Wesley Chapel A.M.E. Church

Wesley Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church will celebrate with a special Mother's Day program Sunday, May 14, at 11 a.m. Guest evangelist will be Rev. Ruby Hallmon. Everyone is invited to attend.

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