

This chapter is one sentence in Hebrew,  
with 22 verses! (the same number of letters as in the Hebrew alphabet)

There are two major sections – v1-11 and v12-22.

Each section has three stanzas.

The first three stanzas (v1-4, v5-8, and v9-11) each begin with an ‘aleph’ –  
the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

The second three stanzas (v12-15, v16-19, and v20-22) each begin a ‘lamed’ –  
the twelfth letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

And you thought that Paul could be long-winded!  
Now you may see where he got it from!

At the heart of Proverbs 2 is the idea that the way to life is fundamentally about *character*.

As Bruce Waltke puts it,

“”By internalizing parental teaching (v1-4) he will come to fear and know God (v5-8)  
and to learn righteousness intuitively (v9-11)”

with the result that the son will be delivered

“from wicked men (v12-15), the wicked woman (v16-19),  
and in this way to experience life, not death (v20-22).”

Many of you are very much in the same position as the young man in Proverbs 1-9.

You are about to enter adulthood.

And you are facing some important decisions.

The Father in Proverbs 1-9 doesn’t care what career choice you make.

Do you go to college?

Do you get a job?

What are you going to do to make a living?!

Do not be anxious about what you will eat or what you drink or what you will wear!

Those aren’t important questions!!

The important question is *whose voice will you listen to?*

As you get ready to set out on your way,

you will be tempted to follow the voice of crooked men and strange women!

The voices you listen to will determine the path that you walk.

How do you come to know God?

I fear that many think that the way to know God is by study.  
You can study God all you like – and never come to know him.

I like the way Bruce Waltke puts it.  
How do you know how to ride a bicycle?  
Do you study bicycles?  
Do you learn facts about bicycles?

No – you learn to ride a bicycle by committing yourself to the bicycle –  
taking a risk to actually get *on* the bicycle – and develop the skills on the fly!!

How do you come to know God?  
He has told you what to do!  
Come to him in faith!  
If you sit back and wait for God to “do something” –  
you are actively resisting and opposing what he has said!

What has he said?

### **1. Finding Wisdom Is a Quest (v1-4)**

*My son, if you receive my words  
and treasure up my commandments with you,  
<sup>2</sup> making your ear attentive to wisdom  
and inclining your heart to understanding;  
<sup>3</sup> yes, if you call out for insight  
and raise your voice for understanding,  
<sup>4</sup> if you seek it like silver  
and search for it as for hidden treasures,*

Verses 1-4 open with a number of conditional statements.

If you receive my words  
and treasure up my commandments with you,  
making your ear attentive to wisdom,  
and inclining your heart to understanding;  
If you call out for insight  
and raise your voice for understanding;  
If you seek it like silver  
and search for it as for hidden treasures;

What do you seek?  
Do you hunger and thirst after wisdom?  
Is that what you treasure?

Where a man's treasure is, there shall his heart be also.

Jesus knew the book of Proverbs well!  
He doesn't quote it often,  
but his teaching reverberates with Proverbs 1-9.  
But where is your treasure?  
What do you seek?

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

These first four verses of chapter 2 set up the quest.  
If you seek wisdom,  
if you diligently pursue understanding,  
if you set wisdom as your chief desire....

Then what?

## **2. Because to Find Wisdom Is to Find God Himself (v5-8)**

<sup>5</sup> *then you will understand the fear of the LORD  
and find the knowledge of God.*

<sup>6</sup> *For the LORD gives wisdom;  
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;*

<sup>7</sup> *he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;  
he is a shield to those who walk in integrity,*

<sup>8</sup> *guarding the paths of justice  
and watching over the way of his saints.*

verses 5-11 give us the result.

There are two parts—two “thens,”

### **a) you will understand the fear of the LORD**

“*then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God*” (v5);

### **b) you will understand every good path**

“*then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path*” (v9)

If you pursue wisdom and treasure your father's commands,  
then you will understand the fear of the LORD.

Remember that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.

If you would know how to live wisely in this life,  
then you must begin with the knowledge of God.

John Calvin said that true knowledge begins with the knowledge of God and of ourselves.

In order to see ourselves aright, we must know God,

but in order to understand God aright, we need also to understand  
who we are in relation to him.  
To know God is not merely to have lots of knowledge about God;  
it is to live in right relation to God—to be in fellowship with God.

### 3. Then Wisdom Will Guard You (v9-11)

<sup>9</sup> *Then you will understand righteousness and justice  
and equity, every good path;*  
<sup>10</sup> *for wisdom will come into your heart,  
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;*  
<sup>11</sup> *discretion will watch over you,  
understanding will guard you,*

Likewise, in verse 9, the second “then” is that you will understand righteousness and justice,  
equity, every good path.  
If you make your ear attentive to wisdom,  
**then** you will live in right relation with God and man.

These two “thens” are each explained by a “for.”  
And since *ki* is the Hebrew word for “for” or “because”,  
it is apt to say that there are two “kis” to the result of the pursuit of wisdom!

The first “ki” to the pursuit of wisdom is that the LORD himself gives wisdom.  
The reason why the one who heeds wisdom will find the knowledge of God,  
is because knowledge and understanding have their source in God’s own mouth.

And he stores up sound wisdom for the upright.  
God is the source of wisdom.  
And not only is he the source, but he is also the guardian of the paths of justice.  
“He is a shield to those who walk in integrity,  
guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints.” (7-8)

Does this mean that nothing bad ever happens to his saints?  
No.

After all, consider the One who walked the path of justice perfectly:  
Jesus, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,  
in whom we behold the Son of God come to full measure  
in deity and manhood alike.  
Truly the LORD was his shield and defender,  
and yet he was left alone to suffer the wrath of God!

Yet even as Jesus cried out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?!”  
the Father still watched over the path of his holy one.

The way of wisdom is not necessarily an easy way!

But it *is* the way of life:

“Better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife.” (17:1)

“Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man  
who is crooked in his ways.” (28:6)

God’s watchful care for you does not guarantee an easy life;  
but it does guarantee life!

“For wisdom will come into your heart,  
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;  
discretion will watch over you,  
understanding will guard you.”

And thus you will be delivered from the evil way.

And as there were two parts to the blessings in verses 5-11,  
so also there are two parts to the dangers of verses 12-19  
(the wicked men of verses 12-15, and the strange woman of v16-19)

#### **4. You Will Be Delivered from the Way of Wicked Men (v12-15)**

<sup>12</sup> *delivering you from the way of evil,  
from men of perverted speech,*

<sup>13</sup> *who forsake the paths of uprightness  
to walk in the ways of darkness,*

<sup>14</sup> *who rejoice in doing evil  
and delight in the perverseness of evil,*

<sup>15</sup> *men whose paths are crooked,  
and who are devious in their ways.*

Wisdom will “deliver you” from the *way* of evil (12)  
from those “who forsake” the *paths* of uprightness (13)  
“whose *paths* are crooked” (14-15)  
Who are devious in their *ways*.

The Father clearly warns against walking down a certain *path*.

But also notice once again the importance of *words*.

The way of evil is described as “men of perverted speech.”

Perversion is another way to talk about that which is “crooked” –  
perverted speech means speech that leads in a rebellious direction.

You know that moment!

That moment when you think to yourself –  
“If I do this, it will lead to misery and ruin!”  
And then you do it anyway!  
That is what it means to follow perverted speech.

It means to listen to another voice besides the voice of wisdom.

Their speech is perverted – their paths are crooked –  
they are *bent* –  
they are twisted –  
they are headed down winding roads that lead to death!

And that’s the point of the “strange woman” in verse 16-19:

**5. ...The Way of the Strange Woman – the Way of Death (v16-19)**

<sup>16</sup> *So you will be delivered from the forbidden<sup>[a]</sup> woman,  
from the adulteress<sup>[b]</sup> with her smooth words,  
<sup>17</sup> who forsakes the companion of her youth  
and forgets the covenant of her God;  
<sup>18</sup> for her house sinks down to death,  
and her paths to the departed;<sup>[c]</sup>  
<sup>19</sup> none who go to her come back,  
nor do they regain the paths of life.*

In both cases, the devious men and the strange woman are covenant breakers.  
They have departed from (or forsaken) the right way.  
They are Israelites who have refused the way of wisdom  
and who have chosen the path of folly.

We’ve got lots of these in America.  
People who call themselves Christians,  
but who have long since departed from the way of wisdom.

What do we see in verses 12-19?

We see the way—the path—of Folly.  
There is the way of crooked men—  
those who walk in the ways of darkness,  
who rejoice in doing evil;  
How do you avoid them?

Seek wisdom.  
She will protect you.

There is the way of the adulterous wife,  
who allures you with her smooth words—  
who calls you to forget the covenant of your God.

Remember Delilah—who captured the heart of Samson with her smooth words!  
How do you escape her?

Seek wisdom.  
She will protect you.

Folly may wear many guises.  
She may take all sorts of different forms.  
But she is still folly!

Only Wisdom can deliver you from her wily ways.  
For none who go to her come back,  
Literally, “none who enter into her return”

That is a powerful image.  
The adulteress is a picture of death:  
enter her and there is no return.

Nor do they regain the paths of life.

This is the land of no return,  
“The road from which there is no way back”

You see,  
Folly is not just making a bad decision here or there.  
Folly is a way—it is a path—it is the whole tenor and direction of your life.

What the trajectory of your life?  
What path are you on?

As we’ll see as we get a bit further in Proverbs,  
the question is whether you will marry Wisdom or Folly.  
Will you spend your life and your strength in the pursuit of Wisdom?  
Or will you devote your energies to Folly?

To the simple—to those who have not committed themselves one way or the other—  
Wisdom warns that you cannot remain uncommitted.  
The only way to be delivered from Folly,  
is to pursue Wisdom and devote yourself to her teaching.

Christ alone is the Wisdom that can satisfy your soul—  
all other pursuits are empty;  
all other paths are dead ends—they end in death.

**6. The End of the Two Ways (v20-22)**

<sup>20</sup> *So you will walk in the way of the good  
and keep to the paths of the righteous.*

<sup>21</sup> *For the upright will inhabit the land,  
and those with integrity will remain in it,*

<sup>22</sup> *but the wicked will be cut off from the land,  
and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.*

But if you heed the teaching of the Father,  
then you will walk in the way of the good  
and keep to the paths of the righteous.

There is a fellowship here.

The “way of the good” is the path that the saints walk together;  
the paths of the righteous

The paths of the righteous are none other than the way of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Stand at the crossroads and look,  
and ask for the ancient paths,  
where the good way is, and walk in it,  
and find rest for your souls!” (Jeremiah 6:16)

Jesus’ way is easy—  
his commands are not burdensome!

But it is the way of the cross,  
and the only way to walk this road is to die—  
to put to death the deeds of the flesh, to forsake the paths of folly.

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

Those who are in Christ, who have been cleansed from all their sins,  
are not only declared upright in their justification,  
they are also made upright in their sanctification.

You may not think of Christ as being afar off—  
at a distance from you—  
because he is your very life:  
he has become for us Wisdom from God,  
and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

But the wicked will be cut off from the land,  
and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.

Covenant-breakers will be destroyed.

Those who turn aside from the path of life and spend their days in the house of fools  
will surely perish.

This is not just a passive statement: as though the wicked will simply “happen” to perish.

This is an excommunication—a cutting off—  
what Paul speaks of when he says that God cut off faithless Israel,

“Branches were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith.  
So do not become proud, but stand in awe.

For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you.

Note then the kindness and the severity of God:

severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you,  
provided you continue in his kindness.

Otherwise you too will be cut off.” (Romans 11:20-22)

Paul warns against apostasy—

against turning aside from the way of wisdom.

Paul insists that what was true in Solomon’s day is just as true today.

Those who break covenant with God and spend their life in folly’s house  
will surely be broken off and will perish.

“The wicked will be cut off from the land,  
and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.”

Let us pray!