

Wisdom for the World (# 2) Proverbs 2:



Studies in Proverbs prepared by Dr. Bob Bernhardt (RobertBernhardt.com)
Based on the Contemporary English Version of the Bible (provided)

"From these (Proverbs), an ordinary person can learn to be smart, and young people can gain knowledge and good sense." (Proverbs 1:4)

An Introduction to Chapter two of Proverbs:

It is important to understand the nature of the material in Proverbs. Proverbs is written in the voice of a mature believer who is exhorting and encouraging his fellow believers, and in fact the whole world, in what it means to live wisely. In that sense the declarations in Proverbs are not spoken in the voice of God but in the voice of a servant of God. In essence this voice is saying, this is how we should live and these are the consequences that I have observed in the lives of those who live according to this pattern.

It is quite clear that there is not an absolute and guaranteed cause and effect relationship between the wise conduct and the blessed life. On the other hand the message of Proverbs is that wisdom is not a matter of knowing but of living and not just of performing a specific act but of establishing a consistent pattern. It is clear that the message is that you ignore this wise living at your inevitable peril.

The text provided here is the Contemporary English Version, released by the American Bible Society in 1995.

Proverbs 2: 1-15 Wisdom and Bad Friends

¹My child, you must follow and treasure my teachings and my instructions. ²Keep in tune with wisdom and think what it means to have common sense. ³Beg as loud as you can for good common sense. ⁴Search for wisdom as you would search for silver or hidden treasure. ⁵Then you will understand what it means to respect and to know the LORD God.

⁶All wisdom comes from the LORD, and so do common sense and understanding. ⁷God gives helpful advice ^[a] to everyone who obeys him and protects all of those who live as they should. ⁸God sees that justice is done, and he watches over everyone who is faithful to him. ⁹With wisdom you will learn what is right and honest and fair. ¹⁰Wisdom will control your mind, and you will be pleased with knowledge.

¹¹Sound judgment and good sense will watch over you. ¹²Wisdom will protect you from evil schemes and from those liars ¹³who turned from doing good to live in the darkness. ¹⁴Most of all they enjoy being mean and deceitful. ¹⁵They are dishonest themselves, and all they do is crooked.

Proverbs 2:16-22 Wisdom and Sexual Purity

¹⁶Wisdom will protect you from the smooth talk of a sinful woman, ¹⁷who breaks her wedding vows and leaves the man she married when she was young. ¹⁸The road to her house leads down to the dark world of the dead. ¹⁹Visit her, and you will never find the road to life again. ²⁰Follow the example of good people and live an honest life. ²¹If you are honest and innocent, you will keep your land; ²²if you do wrong and can never be trusted, you will be rooted out.

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Proverbs, Chapter 2. Notes on the Text.

2:1-3 The concepts of searching and treasure remind us of how these same ideas were presented by Christ.

2:6,7 Passages like this seem to have a universal application. This word is for all people everywhere.

2:13 Here is an example in Proverbs of the light and darkness theme so prevalent in the scriptures.

2:16-18 The objective of the seduction is not just sexual temptation but it leads to other immorality.

Applying the wisdom of Proverbs to our lives in today's world.

All of the wisdom in Proverbs is useless if we do not find ways of applying it to our lives. Here are some comments about topics in Proverbs 2 that you are invited to evaluate and respond to.

Discussion/ Reflection topic # 1. On Common Sense.

Proverbs makes reference to the concept of "common sense." Our world is fascinated by this concept too. Here are some definitions:

Common sense is defined by [Merriam-Webster](#) as, "sound and prudent judgment based on a simple perception of the situation or facts." Thus, "common sense" (in this view) equates to the knowledge and experience which most people already have, or which the person using the term believes that they do or should have. The [Cambridge Dictionary](#) defines it as, "the basic level of practical knowledge and judgment that we all need to help us live in a reasonable and safe way".

What additional or unique factors are attached to the idea of common sense in Proverbs?

Discussion/ Reflection topic # 2. On being honest.

Proverbs talks a lot about honesty. Read the following blog post and consider how it relates to what you are reading in Proverbs.

From the time we are sitting in class in kindergarten to decades later as we sit at a desk in our office, a message is being transmitted to us. *This message is telling white lies is okay and that dishonesty is acceptable in our society.* We turn our televisions and watch programming where children and adults lie to get or stay out of trouble. We overhear our parents or family members being dishonest with one another from time to time. Before we know it, we grow up thinking that being dishonest is acceptable. We copy homework in school. When we don't want to meet up with our friends, we make up an excuse instead of being honest. We end relationships with our boyfriends and girlfriends under false pretenses, telling them that we are not ready for a relationship when really we just are not in love with them.

This culture of dishonesty pervades our lives at every turn, in our relationships with family, friends and coworkers. *Perhaps the worst part is that we can arrive at a point in our lives where we don't even realize we are doing it anymore.* We may not have harmful intentions, yet the white lies fly out of our mouths without any thought.

Do you agree with what this writer has to say about honesty/dishonesty in human lives?
What advice would Proverbs offer for breaking free from a culture of dishonesty?

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Discussion/ Reflection topic # 3 . On being mean to others..

Within the past year an anonymous female writer posted the following question to an Internet question forum:

Why do I enjoy being mean to people?

I don't really understand myself... I can't stand when people criticize or insult me, yet I enjoy putting people down (not everyone, just certain ones) a lot. I realize that it's terrible of me and I've tried to convince myself to take a path of becoming a better person... but then my mind backtracks, I think of how I'd rather be mean to these people than ever swallow my pride and be nice, and then I start all over again.

Do you think that there are many people who share this person's problem? How would you respond if this person asked for your opinion?

Do you think that this relates to the ongoing discussion about bullying in our contemporary culture?

For personal reflection:

Do you ever have to check yourself to stop yourself being mean to others? If so, what situations create that response in you?

Thoughts to carry around with you.

Proverbs is about being wise not just about living a moral life. From the perspective of Proverbs you could perhaps be moral without God but you could not be wise without God. Wisdom always involves knowing and respecting God.

Do you have a plan for becoming wise (or wiser) ?

Listen to the message of Proverbs to find out what such a plan would include.