

Ir-ot-31
Happy is the Man That Findeth Wisdom
Proverbs and Ecclesiastes
By Lenet Hadley Read

(This material helps us understand the importance of wisdom, and uses these scriptures to show us how to obtain it)

I. Because wise Solomon was the major author of Proverbs, one of its chief themes is “Wisdom.” And thus these scriptures have a lot to say about how to obtain wisdom.

II. One of the most important ways is to **ask for it**, as is shown by Solomon’s asking and being granted wisdom (1 Kings 3 and 4). **While King Solomon’s wisdom bore witness of the far greater wisdom of Jesus the Christ, still he was initially a man of wisdom himself.**

- A. **His showing that one can ask for and thus obtain wisdom is confirmed by James 1:5.** “And if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”
- B. **Remember that Joseph Smith, believing this, did ask, and did receive!** And by continually asking about truth, he was continually guided by the Lord and restored the many wise principles of the true Church upon the earth.
- C. There is no doubt that the promise is made there for all of us, if we sincerely desire greater understanding about truth, although the ways in which we obtain it will likely be very different than the way Joseph initially obtained it.
 - 1 Note that in our day, since so much truth has been restored and made available to us, the chief way by which we should seek for understanding is first to study earnestly those things which have already been revealed.
 - 2 Then we may seek confirmation from the spirit about what has been revealed, and pursue additional understanding.
- D. Many General Authorities have built upon wise counsel taken from Proverbs through additional study, pondering, and prayer. Have we not heard from their lips expanded counsel on “A soft answer turneth away wrath,” (Proverbs 15:1), or “A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance” (Proverbs 15:13), and many more?
 - 1. Very often it is while we try to teach truths that we are led to greater understanding ourselves.

III. As Solomon was a pattern for Christ, when one actually reads the Proverbs, one realizes **it is often the Lord Himself teaching many of the truths about wisdom.**

A. The Lord tells us what things block us from obtaining wisdom. “Because I have called, and ye refused. I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would [have] none of my reproof (Proverbs 1:24-25).”

1. For, it is explained, Wisdom comes when we are humble enough to accept the chastening of the Lord and of His servants:

a. “rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning,” (Proverbs 9:8-9).

B. **So, the Lord is the way to wisdom:** “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord ... (Proverbs 3:5-7).”

- C. In Ecclesiastes, the writer, after looking at his life of wealth and pleasures, acknowledges that they are all vanity. *This* is what he says is essential:
“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this the whole duty of man.
“For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).
If we are wise, and want more wisdom, we would hearken to such counsel.

IV. We learn from Proverbs **that wisdom preceded all creation, and was a great motivating force behind it. And thus it is a gift to us through obedience to the Lord.**

- A. “[Speaking as Wisdom] The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way... I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I [Wisdom] was brought forth; when there was no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled... While as yet he had not made the earth, ... When he prepared the heavens... Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men. Now **therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instructions, and be wise, and refuse it not...** For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.” (Selected portions of Proverbs 8:22-35).

B. We should emphasize that the greatest portion of God’s wisdom went into working out of the wondrous Plan of Salvation!

1. Think of the hymn, “How Great the Wisdom and the Love that filled the Courts on High,” which speaks of the Father’s and the Son’s wondrous wisdom and love in providing a Savior that all mankind can be saved and even exalted if they will be believing, repentant and obedient.

- C. When we acknowledge that God is Wise and Loving, we recognize why He said to Joseph Smith in the First Vision that the creeds of the earth’s churches were “an abomination in his sight (JS-History 1:19).” For they portray Him as petty, unloving and uncaring: [Believing He casts infants into Hell because they had no opportunity to be baptized; “electing” only a few to be saved, while all the rest are cast into Hell; allowing all those born before Christ or who lived in lands or times where they had no opportunity to hear Christ’s teachings, to be cast into Hell]. This is not a God of Love, nor of Wisdom.

V. One of the most beautiful proverbs contains praise to a virtuous woman. **But note that one of her great qualities is the possession and usage of wisdom.**

- A. “Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies.... She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.... She stretcheth out her hands to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.... Strength and honour are her clothing: ... **She openeth her mouth with wisdom;** and in her tongue is the law of kindness.... Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised” (Proverbs 31: Selected verses from 10-30).

VI. The pain and suffering we experience in this life are a great conduit to wisdom if we will allow it.

- A. Dr. Paul Brand in his book, *Pain: The Gift Nobody Wants*, speaks of years working with leprosy patients in India. While leprosy had been considered a disease of “bad flesh,” Dr. Brand finally came to discover that the real problem was that the flesh had lost its ability to feel pain, due to damage to the nerves. Therefore people with leprosy would put their hands into fire to retrieve things, because they felt nothing. Of course the burns they could not feel would destroy their flesh. He found that other patients lost fingers and toes. While generally believed these bodily features dropped off from disease, he found that rats ate them off in the night because the helpless leper could not feel their gnawing.
- B. His studies led him to realize that **pain [which most of us want to escape] is not a terrible curse, but is actually a great gift from God --- to provide us warning and thus learning experiences.**
- C. Eventually, through further study, he learned that people could manage most pain without artificial means if they realized it was actually a precious gift and were given counsel about how to do so.
- D. As with most truths, there are both physical and spiritual applications to this information. We should understand that life’s physical and spiritual sufferings are actually great gifts. They are there to give us warnings and protect us against even greater sorrows and dangers. **We learn from them.** And if we learn well enough, **they eventually lead us to higher wisdoms and even higher happiness.**
- E. In fact, it has been the experience of many, including this author, that in the midst of one’s greatest trials a surge of inexplicable gratitude arises; for somehow one knows that what one is experiencing is of the Lord, and ultimately will work for one’s good, **and bring wisdom.**

VII. There are additional writings attributed to Solomon. One of those, outside the Biblical record, is the “Odes of Solomon.” One ode shows a beautiful understanding of the atonement.

A. “For there is a helper for me, the Lord... He became like me, that I might receive him. In form he was considered like me, **that I might put him on.** And I trembled not when I saw Him, because he was gracious to me.” (Emphasis added)

B. This concept of “putting on The Lord” is particularly beautiful when we realize that the Hebrew word translated “atonement” means “to cover.” The truth is that the Savior can and will cover our sins, if we are repentant, seek Him in Faith and obey His word. What Love and Wisdom!

VIII. We too can find Wisdom, and it will bring us greater happiness than most of the things we pursue in life.

- A. Ultimately, the Lord tells us, through Solomon’s writings, “Happy is the man who findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding... For ...it is better than ...silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her (Proverbs 3:13-15).”