

## Prayers

### Opening prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, You have given us life. Help us therefore to accept our personal circumstances as Your gift to us, and the arena in which we must live our faith;

teach us to know and love Your ways,  
energise us with a desire to do Your will,  
inspire us by Your vision of the future,  
and grant us peace in the knowledge of our salvation.

We rejoice to live the disciplines of faith by which we walk into life eternal, with You, our Saviour and our Lord; AMEN

### Prayer Suggestions

General theme of the week: WATER

**1. For yourself**

*Praise God for the gift of water and pray for those who do not have easy access to this precious resource*

**2. For your friends and family**

*Pray for the health of those you love, pray for each of them and their different conditions or other health problems*

**3. For the church and its work**

*Pray for your church especially those who clean it and keep it good order; for without water, where would they be?*

**4. For your neighbourhood, your country and the world (News)**

*Pray for those areas of the world that do not get enough water and need rain. Pray for those who suffer the effects of drought, this is a continual problem in the world even though it only hits our news headlines occasionally*

### Meditation

Is this the time we have been waiting for my friend?

When people are fooled and lead astray  
By those who reject God's Word?

When false prophets regularly appear  
Claiming to be all things to all people?

When the world is consumed by war  
Because nations have turned on each other?

When earthquakes and famines cover the world  
But the end has clearly not yet come?

When many of God's people fall from faith  
And are reduced to hating each other?

When the Church of God is hated by nations  
Because of the name of Jesus?

When those who believe are handed over  
Yet those who endure know salvation?

When at dead of night and unexpectedly  
The 'thief in the night' will surely come?

Yes, this is the time, my friend, this is the time.

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# Bible Study

## Bible passage – Proverbs 2:1-8

<sup>1</sup> *My child,*

*if you accept what I teach you and keep my instructions firmly within you,*

<sup>2</sup> *if you listening carefully to wisdom in order to understand it in your heart;*

<sup>3</sup> *if you yearn for insight and search openly for knowledge;*

<sup>4</sup> *if you search for it as you would for silver, as if exploring for hidden treasure;*

<sup>5</sup> *then you will come to know what it means to fear the Lord, and find out the facts about God.*

<sup>6</sup> *It is the Lord who gives wisdom, and all knowledge and understanding comes from Him.* <sup>7</sup> *He securely holds wisdom for the righteous, and He protects those who are upright,* <sup>8</sup> *guarding the paths of justice and preserving the way of those who are faithful to Him.*

## Review

***Here, Wisdom offers advice about having the right attitude towards godly knowledge and insight. An understand of God cannot be obtained by one whose mind is closed to the idea of gaining knowledge ...***

It is immediately obvious from the beginning of this passage that Wisdom speaks as a teacher to a child. But is this teaching for children? In ancient Israel the picture of a father teaching a child was used to describe teaching in general, and father and child merely represent teacher and student, of whatever age. We would therefore be wrong to dismiss this teaching as merely advice for children. As we will see, the teaching here is appropriate for all who will learn of any age; indeed, all God's people are called 'children of the Lord' elsewhere in Scripture (Deuteronomy 14:1), and God expects all His people to be willing to learn from Him.

As is typical of the early chapters of Proverbs, there is not much teaching here in the form of 'do this' or 'don't do that'. Our passage outlines a right attitude towards Wisdom and what is learned (2:1-5). It also describes the source of all Wisdom as God Himself; He gives Wisdom, and He protects it in the hearts of His own, who are called the 'righteous' (2:6). This sounds straightforward, but the more we dig into this passage, the more challenging we will find it becomes.

The passage opens with an appeal to the '*child*', meaning the 'learner', to aspire to four different characteristics if they want to know what it means to '*fear the Lord, and find out the facts about God*' (2:5). Each of these four appeals are found in verses 1 to four respectively, and begin with '*if*', and as one proceeds to the other, they go deeper and deeper into the human soul. Finally, all these characteristics are appropriate for those who would come close to God (2:5) and receive His benefits (2:6-8).

The first appeal is for the learner to have an open mind, '*to accept what I teach and keep my instructions firmly within you*' (2:1). As is obvious, no learning can take place unless someone is willing to receive instruction and more than this, to absorb it. This may seem a simple point, but how often do people listen to a sermon or other teaching in the church, with a mind that says 'I already know what I think'? We cannot expect spiritual growth under such circumstances. We all need to keep a watchful eye against false teaching and error, but we cannot grow in the knowledge of the truth unless we appreciate that there is always more for us to learn about God's riches, and are open to it.

The second appeal is for learners to '*listen carefully ... in order to understand it in your heart*' (2:2). This may not seem to add much to the appeal of Wisdom in verse 1. The sentence emphasises receiving Wisdom into the '*heart*', but unfortunately, we think of the heart as where we feel about things. It is the place where we either love or hate things, and is commonly thought of as the seat of passion. But ancient Israelites thought differently. They thought of the '*heart*' as the very centre of the soul, where right or wrong are weighed, and action decided. So Wisdom's appeal here is that we take her teaching into the centre of our being to affect the decision making on which we base our lives. This verse is a prime example of how we must be open to learn something new, in this case, about the '*heart*' if we are to understand Scriptural advice.

The third appeal is for the learner to have a true desire to know Wisdom, '*to yearn for insight and search openly for knowledge*' (2:3). Many people who go to church are happy to attend some teaching from time to time, and be ready to learn from the sermons they hear, but Wisdom is here saying something different, she

appeals for God's people to truly want her. This can come as a shock to those of us who have only just begun to read Proverbs and are beginning to get to know what Wisdom literature has to offer; we can hardly be said to feel this deeply about her yet! But in truth, Wisdom is here looking for those who have a true thirst for God's Word in all its forms. Sometimes be presented to us as Wisdom, sometimes it is 'God's Word', and at others, 'prophecy', but all of these forms of God's revelation are equally important. The disciple of Christ must surely have a thirst to hear what God says, and a desire to know what He will reveal.

Then in verse 4, Wisdom appeals for the learner not just to have a desire to know the things of God, but to actively search for them, '*as you would for silver, as if for exploring for hidden treasure*' (2:4). The point is well made, and Jesus hardly changes it when speaking to the disciples about searching for the Kingdom of God. He says that it is like one who searches for a '*pearl of great price*' (Matt 13:46) or a '*treasure hidden in a field*' (Matthew 13:44). The question must be asked; what is the most important thing we can give our time to? If our answers do not include searching for the things of God, then we find ourselves lagging somewhat behind our Lord on the pathway of life.

Of course, as our passage says in verses 6 to 8, everything we seek comes from God, so we will learn most if we keep close to the One who knows all things. Thank God that we can keep far closer to the Lord than those who first heard these words of the book of Proverbs, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Nevertheless, as this passage so clearly teaches, if we have a consuming desire to learn of God and walk with Him on the pathways of life (2:7,8), then we will find that our walk is secure and protected. This passage is itself a treasure not to be missed.

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## Discipleship

### Questions for groups

1. How may we go about searching for wisdom and knowledge? Is it as important for us as described in this passage?
2. Discuss what you mean by the 'fear of the Lord', and how this relates to wisdom and learning.
3. How easy do you find it to think of yourself as the 'righteous'? Do you think of this as a description of others, or of yourself?

### Discipleship challenges

- *Would you class yourself as someone who has wisdom, or one who seeks wisdom? Be truthful with yourself, because if you find the question hard, there may be some underlying issues that this passage need to challenge you about. Offer to God the wisdom you have and the wisdom you seek, and He will bless you.*
- *Pray for those who feel that they have no wisdom and need to spend their lives seeking it, whilst never attaining it. Work out by God's help, what you can do to break down such feelings and attitudes.*

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## Final Prayer

Holy Spirit of God, we do not trust in our own strength, but in the words, the love, the compassion, the understanding, the strength and the truth of Your presence in the world. May we be agents of Your love, ready to accomplish Your will in this world. AMEN