Lesson: Proverbs 2:1-11; Time of Action: 950 B.C.; Place of Action: Jerusalem

Golden Text: “For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2:6).

I. INTRODUCTION. A good decision has often been described even in modern times as demonstrating “the wisdom of Solomon.” This ancient king of Israel was famous in his own time for his intelligence, and yet he promoted a wisdom superior to his own. He turned people’s attention upward to the wisdom that comes from God. This week’s lesson teaches that godly wisdom is a treasure worth seeking. We learn that all believers need to go on a search for God’s wisdom. Wonderful benefits are available for each earnest searcher.

II. THE LESSON BACKGROUND. The Hebrew word for “proverbs” means comparisons, similitudes, or parables. We often use the term “proverbs” to describe a short, concise insightful expression of a particular truth or experience. It communicates practical, moral guidance in an effective way. Parables are intended to draw pictures in the mind; they
carry a message that will not soon be forgotten. Solomon wrote the major portion of Proverbs around 950 B.C. Chapters 30 and 31 are credited to Agur and Lemuel, respectively. When Solomon became king of Israel, the LORD appeared to him in a dream and said, “Ask what I shall give thee” (see I Kings 3:5). Solomon responded saying “Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart” (see I Kings 3:9). After God granted the request, “Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country” (see I Kings 4:30). The book of Proverbs contains some of the three thousand proverbs that God gave to Solomon (see I Kings 4:32). Solomon probably spoke many of these when people came to hear his wisdom (see I Kings 4:34). In the chaotic days in which we live, men and women need wisdom to avoid the treacherous pitfalls on the road of life. Proverbs gives timeless principles regarding human character and conduct.

III. SEEKING GOD’S WISDOM (Proverbs 5:1-5)

A. Learning wisdom (Proverbs 2:1-2).

1. (vs. 1). Our first verse says “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee...” A godly father wants nothing more than for his children to learn how to live as God intended them to. Solomon was eager to have his son live right. This can only be done by following God’s Word. So in this verse Solomon said “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my
commandments with thee.” Solomon’s use of the word “if” makes it clear that his “son” or anyone in general, had to do certain things in order to gain wisdom. In other words, gaining wisdom was conditioned on receiving or accepting Solomon’s “words.” The first step to gaining wisdom is to “receive” the teaching of the wise (see Proverbs 10:8). This is actually a student-teacher relationship. A person or student seeking wisdom must be receptive to the truth if it is to take root, and God’s Word is truth (see John 17:17). Once the student has heard the truth, Solomon said that they need to “hide my commandments with thee.” The terms “words” and “commandments” refer to the wisdom Solomon is about to impart to his “son.” The word “hide” means “to store up.” Once his “son” has heard the truth, he needs to store up this wisdom so that it is available to him whenever he needs it. Hiding or storing up wisdom indicates that Solomon’s “son” or any student values it. He recognizes that even if the usefulness of what he is learning is not immediately noticed, someday it will prove to be valuable to him. If Solomon’s “commandments” had not been according to God’s truth, they would not have been valuable. But this verse makes it clear that godly wisdom was the teacher, Solomon’s aim.

2. (vs. 2). This verse says “So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding...” Reflecting the poetic Hebrew parallelism that was common in Proverbs, the two statements in this verse are similar in meaning, but with a slightly different emphasis. In the first statement, Solomon said “So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom.” The word “ear”
draws attention to the need of listening closely to “wisdom.” To “apply thine heart to understanding” means that the student seeks “wisdom” conscientiously, and strives eagerly for it. Here the words “wisdom” and “understanding” are similar with “wisdom” being a general term for knowledge that helps us live as we should and “understanding” emphasizes the importance of discernment. Gaining “wisdom” involves more than just the “ear;” the “heart” must also be involved. In the Scriptures, the “heart” refers to our ability to reason and consider spiritual things (see Psalms 14:1; 15:2; Proverbs 3:5; 4:23).

B. Seeking wisdom (Proverbs 2:3-5).

1. (vs. 3). This verse says “Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding...” Solomon continues to emphasize the importance of wisdom by again using the word “if” indicating another condition that must be met to gain wisdom. Solomon said “Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding.” This exhortation no doubt refers to prayer. The verbs “criest” and “liftest” convey the urgency involved in seeking wisdom. We are not to lazily pursue the truth. We must “cry after knowledge” like someone who is about to perish from hunger begs for food. Every now and then prayers won’t do; we must be importunate, as if we know the worth of knowledge and our own need for it. We must also lift our “voice” or call out “for understanding,” lifting it up to heaven expecting to receive “understanding” one of the good and perfect gifts that God gives (see James 1:17). We
show the urgency we have in gaining wisdom when we constantly go to the source, God, and ask for it (see James 1:5). In Proverbs 1:20-23, wisdom is seen as crying out in public areas, longing to be heard. But here, we are the ones who are told to cry out and call out for wisdom.

2. (vs. 4). This verse says “If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures...” Once again Solomon uses the word “if” to show that gaining wisdom is also conditioned on some other things he is about to declare. He said to his son, “If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures.” Finding wisdom is also conditioned on “seeking her as silver.” We should seek wisdom as if it was a rich “silver” mine. We should also “searchest for her as for hid treasures.” Both “silver” and hidden “treasures” are so valuable that people will go to great lengths to get them. The same thing should be true of wisdom. Too often God’s people talk about wanting to know God’s Word but show very little passion for it. If we truly believe that the wisdom and knowledge of God is the most valuable thing we can have and pursue after it like it is, our passion for wisdom and our sense of urgency to get it will increase.

3. (vs. 5). This verse says “Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.” This verse reveals what will happen to the student “if” they followed Solomon’s instructions in the first 4 verses. First, Solomon said “Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord.” The word “then” introduces what will happen if the son would do what his
father said in verses 1-4; (1) receive my (Solomon’s) words, and hide my (Solomon’s) commandments with him; (2) incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; (3) criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; and (4) seekest her (wisdom) as silver, and searchest for her (wisdom) as for hid treasures. If his son did all of those things, Solomon said “Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD.” This “fear” is not abject terror, but it’s a healthy sense of awe and respect for God as we recognize Him for who He is. It is extreme reverence for “the LORD.” Not only would his son “understand the fear of the Lord,” he would also “find the knowledge of God.” The “fear of the LORD” and “the knowledge of God” go together, for a person cannot properly know God without having a profound sense of reverence and respect for Him.

IV. FINDING GOD’S WISDOM (Proverbs 2:6-11)

A. The source of wisdom (Proverbs 2:6). This verse says “For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.” Not only is “the LORD” wise Himself, but He “giveth wisdom,” and that’s more than the wisest men in the world can ever do. It is God’s prerogative and His only to open our understanding. All the “wisdom” in any creature is God’s free gift, and He gives it liberally (see James 1:5). In addition, God has blessed the world with a revelation of His will. Solomon went onto say “Out of his mouth cometh knowledge and
understanding.” By the law and the prophets, by the written Word and by His ministers, which are all “His mouth” to the children of men, “cometh knowledge and understanding.” It is certainly encouraging to search after “wisdom” knowing that we have the Scriptures to search, in which we may find “wisdom” if we seek it diligently.

B. Protection for the wise (Proverbs 2:7-8).

1. (vs. 7). This verse says “He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.” Still speaking about the L ORD who gives “wisdom” Solomon said “He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous.” God shows favor to those who are “righteous” or who have a right standing with Him. For them, God “layeth up” or stores away not just “wisdom,” but “sound wisdom” or the best advice. God is also “a buckler to them that walk uprightly.” In other words, He is a shield to those who live with integrity (see Proverbs 30:5), those who have honorable character and moral courage. The term “buckler” refers to “a shield” which is tied around a soldier’s arm to provide a defense against a sword or spear. Even those who “walk uprightly” may face danger as the trial of their faith, but God is, and will be “a buckler to them” so that if anything happens to them they won’t experience any real harm because they are safe.

2. (vs. 8). This verse says “He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.” Here Solomon continues to advise his son of the grace God shows to His own. First, he said that God “keepeth the
paths of judgment.” The word “keepeth” here means “to guard” or “to keep watch.” The term “judgment” here means “justice.” Therefore, the phrase “He keepeth the paths of judgment” means that God watches over His own as they walk in “the way” of justice or fairness for they may be tempted to turn aside out of that way. Second, Solomon said that God also “preserveth the way of his saints” meaning that the LORD guides and protects “His saints” in every area of their lives. The word “saints” refers to believers in the LORD who have been separated from the world and consecrated to the worship and service of God. The word “consecration” which means setting apart, and the word “purity” are basic meanings of the term “saints.” God “preserveth the way of his saints” so that our “way” won’t be perverted. He preserves us, His saints, in our “way” keeping us safe and blameless to our place in His heavenly kingdom.

C. Preserved in wisdom (Proverbs 2:9-11).

1. (vs. 9). This verse says “Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.” As we allow the LORD to direct us and call on His help, Solomon said “Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity.” In other words, we will know how to conduct ourselves properly and rightly towards all men. We will “understand” by the Word of God, “righteousness (right living), and judgment (justice), and equity (fairness).” These principles will guide and govern the saint in his or her whole conversation or life, and will also make us fit for every
relationship and every business venture, being trustworthy in everything. As we “understand” God’s Word, which is His wisdom (see John 1:1-5; I Corinthians 1:23-24), it will give the believer not only a right view of justice, but also the desire to practice it and treat everybody right. Following these godly characteristics of “righteousness (right living), and judgment (justice), and equity (fairness)” will lead the saint in “every good path,” for “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (see I Timothy 3:16-17).

2. (vs. 10). This verse says “When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul...” Here the words “heart” and “soul” both refer to the inner person, who they really are (see Psalms 13:2; 34:2; Mathew 12:34-35; 15:18-19; Mark 7:21). Solomon appears to see “wisdom” and “knowledge” as the same things. So he said, “When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul,” he is about to tell his son what happens when “wisdom,” God’s Word “entereth” or takes possession of one’s “heart” and “knowledge is pleasant” or a delight “unto thy soul.”

3. (vs. 11). Our final verse says “Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee...” Here Solomon reveals to his son what happens when we allow “wisdom” and “knowledge” to possess our heart and soul (see verse 10). When that happens, Solomon said
“Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee.” Here again, Solomon uses poetic parallelism using different words “Discretion” and “understanding” to say the same thing. Both “discretion” and “understanding” are said to “preserve” and “keep” the believer. In essence, God keeps “the way of his saints” (see Proverbs 2:8), by giving us “discretion” or the ability to make wise decisions that will “keep” us out of harm’s way, and able to resist the temptations of the devil.

V. Conclusion. In a fallen world it is not easy to pursue wisdom in the way it deserves. The world offers substitutes that pass for wisdom but leave us bankrupt in the end. This is why the first part of Proverbs centers on the importance of wisdom and on encouraging God’s people to pursue it. Wisdom means living life according to God’s rules. When we live wisely, we receive great riches because we are in fellowship with the source of all blessings—our Heavenly Father.