

# Wisdom and Youth

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I remember it like it was yesterday. I was a teenager at Florida College, full of energy and life, feeling like I could take on the world. I was going to be successful. I was going to be somebody. I had so many things I wanted to do, places I wanted to visit, goals I wanted to accomplish. And considering just how smart I thought I was, there was no doubt all those dreams would come true.

Maybe you're at a similar stage in life, ready to spread your wings and take the world head on, making your own way. It may be you feel just the opposite, completely overwhelmed by what's ahead, not knowing what you want to do with your life, not feeling ready to spread your wings just yet.

The book of Proverbs is such a practical book. It can help you no matter in which of these situations you find yourself. One of the purposes of the proverbs, says Solomon, is to give "knowledge and discretion to the youth" (Prov. 1:4). The American Heritage Dictionary defines discretion as "ability or power to decide responsibly". That's where most young people are lacking, and that's why the book of Proverbs is so important to the young. For those of you that are young, listen carefully to what he has to say and follow his advice. You will be glad you did for many years to come.

From the outset, he makes the point that **you need wisdom**. Although it's true you become wiser as you grow older and gain more experience, there are plenty of old fools in the world to show that's not all it takes. Wisdom is not the result of osmosis; it's the result of hard work. Notice all the action verbs Solomon uses to describe how you attain wisdom. He says you must "cry out for discernment," "seek her," and "search for her" (2:3-4). In 4:5, he says, "Get wisdom! Get understanding!" You must "take firm hold of instruction" (4:13). All these statements show that you must be active in your pursuit of wisdom, not passive. It takes effort. However, the tremendous benefits far outweigh the effort.

What's so interesting about this search for wisdom is that wisdom wants to be found. She is calling aloud, begging people to listen (1:20ff). In the busy and loud market square, she's competing with all the other street hawkers who are trying to persuade you to buy their wares. Pay no attention to them. Open your ears and your eyes and call out for wisdom to make sure you find her and she finds you. Wisdom is the best product available on the market.

It's not just any wisdom that Solomon recommends. He makes the point repeatedly that **wisdom comes from God**. This is the wisdom for which the father wants his son to search diligently. Ten times, the fear of the Lord is equated with the beginning of knowledge, wisdom, or results that arise from its proper use. Worldly wisdom matters little in the grand scheme of things. However, wisdom from God gives knowledge and understanding so one can choose the paths that lead to righteousness and forsake the crooked paths that lead to wickedness (2:6ff).

People increase in worldly wisdom every day, but in the process they often become fools, rejecting the wisdom of God. People often think they are smart, when in reality they are ignorant. It stems from putting the wrong emphasis on the source of knowledge. When you are young, the world seems fresh, new, and exciting, and it can be easy to have the wrong perspective. It can be easy to observe those that have wealth, prestige, power, and education, and look to them as the source of knowledge and wisdom. But the first place you should look for wisdom is to God and His word. Doing so will lead to life and satisfaction (19:23). Solomon tells his son to trust in the Lord, not in his own understanding (3:5). Since the Lord is the source of all wisdom, that's the obvious place to start.

**Parents are also a great source of wisdom**, especially if they are faithful Christians. Remember, your parents were your age once, and as Solomon said in Ecclesiastes, "there is nothing new under the sun." They've been through exactly what you're going through, which means they have a greater understanding of you than you give them credit for. The rules and decisions they make are grounded in the Word and are designed to keep your soul from the evil one. Heeding their instruction will give you "length of days and long life," and that will bring you peace as well as help you "find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man" (3:2,4).

Part of being wise is being humble. Isn't it ironic that Solomon's own son, Rehoboam, didn't heed to the precept of submitting to those who are wiser? Instead, he listened to his own youthful peers. Of course, that resulted in rebellion and in the Divided Kingdom. Listening to the instruction and advice of those who are older is highly recommended, and the first place to start is your parents.

The stage of life you are in can be one of the most exciting times, but it can also be one of the most difficult. Satan knows this and will exploit every possible means to make you stumble. Don't listen to his lies! "Get wisdom! Get understanding!" Your life here will be better for it, and so will your eternal life.