

# THE WORDS OF THE WISE

*"Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge." (22:17)*

**INTRODUCTION**—Now that we have heard the words of the wise on so many different subjects, the challenge is for us to listen and heed their instruction. What will we do with what we have learned? Our response will expose our wisdom... or our folly!

Proverbs began with a section of lengthy discourses (chapters 1-9) devoted to wisdom itself. Then interspersed throughout the book are reminders and admonitions for us to heed the words of the wise, rather than just intellectually agreeing with them. Various themes are recurrent in these exhortations to heed the wise (The following are suggested by Kenneth T. Aitken in his commentary on *Proverbs*).

## I. A LISTENING EAR

- A. God Made Ears and Eyes to be Used (20:12; 15:31; 24:32).
- B. Attune Our Ears to Instruction (18:15; 23:12). There is an active effort involved in learning from these words. There is great benefit in the attainment of this wisdom (19:8,20).
- C. Danger of Turning a Deaf Ear (15:10,32; 19:27; 29:1). The consequences of not listening are severe.

## II. THE VALUE OF WISDOM

- A. Worth the Cost (23:23). Some things come at great price and many must be had at any price.
- B. An Appealing Commodity. Whereas some important things are necessary but unpleasant, wisdom is both precious (16:16) and sweet (24:13-14).
- C. Practical and Useful (24:3-4).

## III. THE TWO WAYS

- A. Life Restricted to Two Paths (10:17; cf. 4:10-19; Matthew 7:13-14). The wise men challenge us with the two ways of life... not quite as much freedom as we thought! Everyone thinks he is going his own way, being himself... but God says he is traveling one of two paths.
- B. Each Path Radically Changes our Lives (13:13-14; 15:24; 19:16; 21:16).
- C. Each Path Has its Own Destination and Consequences (11:8,19; 13:6; 14:11; 28:18).

## IV. THE FEAR OF THE LORD

- A. The Best Way to Learn Wisdom (15:33). Without that fear, honor, and respect for God, we will learn nothing from what His wisdom teaches.
- B. Bears Fruit in our Lives (14:2; 16:6). It's not done in secret, neither is it done without some attendant response in our lives.
- C. The Best Security in Life (10:27; 14:27). In a world of uncertainty, we need something to stabilize our lives and be a foundation for living.
  - 1. Brings Happiness (16:20; 28:14).
  - 2. Brings Contentment (19:23).

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- 3. Brings Security (14:26; 29:25).
- 4. Brings Hope (23:17-18).

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—**

- 1) *What is different about the words of the wise in Proverbs and the words of advice from people today?*
- 2) *What is the difference between hearing the words of the wise and listening to them?*
- 3) *As many mistakes as we make, why do we still refuse to listen to the instruction of the wise?*
- 4) *We claim to be independent thinkers, architects of our own destiny, and independent enough to travel our own different paths. What does the Proverbs say about the number of paths we can travel? Is it accurate to say we are headed down one of two different paths? Why?*
- 5) *How does the fear of the Lord give us such a good foundation for life?*
- 6) *If we travel the right path, does that mean we will never have problems, never have bad things happen, and never die? How can the Scriptures be accurate to claim blessings for righteous living and consequences for unrighteous living?*
- 7) *What practical benefit do you see to living by these principles?*
- 8) *What use do you plan to make of all that we have learned in this study of the Proverbs?*