



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V27 N1 January 5, 2025

BETTER

Proverbs 3:13-18

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Single-Mindedness
I focus on God and His
priorities for my life.

*"But seek first His kingdom
and His righteousness, and
all these things will be given
to you as well."*

Matthew 6:33



How can you
be single-
minded online?



The need for wisdom today cannot be overstated. We have more access to knowledge and technology than ever before in history. Today students do not need to "know" much since "all" can be looked up online. Ironically, with our flood of instant knowledge we still seem to have a drought of common sense. Consider social media usage. Since 2018, millions of people have become addicted to not just internet data, but to internet video through "reels," "grams," "toks," "shorts," or "snaps." Some estimate that in 2024, 25 to 35 million people 18-34 years in age are regular users of popular social media video feeds. The Pew Research Center has estimated that upwards of 71% of youth 13 to 17 are on popular media feeds daily and 1 in 5 youth of this set are on feeds "almost constantly" (pewrsr.ch/41IIESG).

Increased usage is not the greatest of concerns regarding social media obsession. NPR recently reported that over 14 state attorney generals in 2024 have filed lawsuits against the harmful business practices of one social media company specifically (www.npr.org/gsl-27676). Many of these lawsuits allege that algorithms created by this company are designed with the intended purpose of captivating youthful users to their app. Executives at this company determined that 260 videos was the number of videos required for a user to "likely to become addicted to the platform." With videos averaging 8 seconds each, a user could see over 200 videos in 35 minutes. The company's own research has concluded that compulsive use of their app "correlates with a slew of negative mental health effects like loss of analytical skills, memory formation, contextual thinking, conversational depth, empathy, and increased anxiety." Doomscrolling, binge watching and obsessing over content creators are the antithesis of wisdom.

Social media use lacks wisdom for many not only in the amount of media consump-

tion but also in the prominence of "filters." Pictures and videos can now be altered to "beautify" the content uploaded. When consumers of Instagram and TikTok watch hours of Insta-fluencers they rarely see the "real thing." Faces are not real, and expectations can be excruciatingly high. Glamour Grammers have pushed many young people into body shame, eating disorders and even suicidal ideation. Bullies follow behind to ridicule anyone less attractive than the filtered crowd.

Even more alarming are a series of "challenges" that have crept into the social media sphere. Platforms have hosted numerous videos of young people performing harmful physical challenges. These youngsters are enticed to make their own videos to show their own bravado. Many young people have injured themselves and some have even died taking on one or more of these video peer pressure "challenges."

How can a tool as technologically advanced as a smartphone create so much opportunity for foolishness? What can we do to curb the craziness and the danger of unwise use of pocket technology? Our Core Competency of Single-Mindedness and the ancient wisdom of the Bible can offer some solutions to an obsession with *vlogutainment*. To "focus on God and His priorities for my life" may mean that I will have to turn off the phone or the apps to spend more time alone with God. Much of social media is based upon distraction. Refusing to be distracted for significant amounts of time and focusing on God can help you get a handle on what is getting in the way of God. Consider Jessica Ericksen's helpful article for social media use on the Next Step Disciple website: "Using Social Media as a Christian" (nextstepdisciple.org/article/using-social-media-as-a-Christian). Use tech with purpose for God's kingdom rather than flinging bits and bytes into the abyss of fleeting flash and meaningless noise.

1

EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read Proverbs 3:13-18

13 *Blessed are those who find wisdom,*

those who gain understanding,

14 *for she is more profitable than silver*

and yields better returns than gold.

15 *She is more precious than rubies;*

nothing you desire can compare with her.

16 *Long life is in her right hand;*

in her left hand are riches and honor.

17 *Her ways are pleasant ways,*

and all her paths are peace.

18 *She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her;*

those who hold her fast will be blessed.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline the phrases that have similar meanings in v. 13.
- Circle all the feminine pronouns in this passage.
- Draw box around each item of value in vv. 14-15.
- Underline the words of comparison in vv. 14-15.
- Double underline what is in each hand in v. 16.
- Draw a line connecting similar ideas in v. 17.
- Draw a line connecting "life" in v. 18 to similar ideas in v. 16.
- Circle the words "hold" in v.18
- Draw a line from "blessed" (v. 18) to a similar statement in v. 13.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. What generally happens to those who pursue wisdom (vv. 13, 18)?
2. How does one “find” or “gain” wisdom (v. 13)?
3. Why is wisdom personified as feminine (vv. 14-18)?
4. How is wisdom portrayed in vv. 14-15?
5. How can wisdom be more valuable than precious metals or precious stones (vv. 14-15)?
6. Wisdom does not have hands. What is the meaning of v. 16?
7. Wisdom does not walk. What is the meaning of v. 17?
8. What is involved in “holding” wisdom (v.18)?
9. What do verses 19-20 add to this picture of wisdom found in verses 13-18?
10. How do you get more wisdom into your life?

What makes for a good life? What advice would you share with a friend or family member that would help them the most for a successful career and a productive and meaningful life? Many would suggest pursuing a good education, a good marriage partner, a good family life, and a good retirement plan. The Bible strongly recommends above all these other forms of conventional advice that people pursuing happiness should pursue most ardently the treasure of wisdom. More than financial security, more than academic achievement, more than even familial legacy, the pursuit of wisdom should be a chief lifelong goal. Proverbs 4:7 states “Wisdom is supreme – so acquire wisdom, and whatever you acquire, acquire understanding!” (NET).

Wisdom is a major emphasis of the book of Proverbs. “‘Wisdom’ (Heb. *ḥokmâ*) means generally ‘masterful understanding,’ ‘skill,’ ‘expertise.’... In Proverbs, *ḥokmâ* mostly denotes mastery over experience through the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual state of knowing existentially the deed-destiny nexus – that is, to act on moral-spiritual knowledge out of its internalization (1:2; 2:1-5), thereby enabling its possessor to cope with enigma and adversity, to tear down strongholds, and thus to promote the life of an individual and/or a community (21:22; cf. 24:5; Eccl. 7:19; 9:13-16). A person could memorize the book of Proverbs and still lack wisdom if it did not affect his heart, which informs behavior. *Ḥokmâ* in Proverbs does not refer to the Greek conception of wisdom as philosophical theory or rhetorical sophistry (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-24). ... Moreover, as the pre-ambles makes clear, these capacities are exercised in the realms of righteousness (*śēdeq*), justice (*mišpāt*), and equity (*mēšārīm*), giving wisdom a moral dimension (1:3; 8:20). In this book *ḥokmâ* also has a religious dimension, for its wisdom includes knowledge of the Holy One himself (see 9:10; 30:3). In sum, this book transforms the neutral word ‘wisdom’ and its co-referential terms into virtue. This spiritual-ethical wisdom is a divine gift (2:6; cf. Exod. 31:3; 35:31; 1 K. 3:4-14; Isa. 11:2) that is acquired by anyone valuing it above everything else (Prov. 3:13-18; 8:11-12) and making a single-minded decision to accept it in humility (2:1-4; 3:5-8). It cannot be bought with money (17:16) or acquired merely by keen observation and cogent reflection on the created order, as Agur makes clear (30:1-6; cf. Eccl. 8:17; Isa. 19:11-12)” (Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1-15*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, 76).

Proverbs 1-9 provide the warnings and advice from a loving father to his children. Many times in these first nine chapters a father states “My son...” and then offers pithy phrases of advice and warning. A number of times in this section, the father personifies wisdom as more than just abstract principles and identifies wisdom with imagery of a virtuous or upright woman (1:20-33, 3:14-18; 4:8-9; 7:4; 8:1-36; 9:1-6). These personifications stand in strong contrast to warnings against interaction with un-virtuous men and women (2:12-22; 5:3-23; 6:20-

35; 7:5-27). Folly or foolishness itself is also personified as an “unruly woman” (NIV 9:13-18).

Proverbs 3:13-18 describes wisdom and her value without having her speak. “Proverbs 3:13-20 strikes a different tone from 3:1-12. Whereas 3:1-12 spoke of *Yhwh*, now the focus is on personified Wisdom (vv. 13-18). Unlike in 1:20-33 and 8:1-36, however, here Wisdom herself does not speak but is the subject of hymnic statements. Proverbs 3:13-20 was written in the light of [Proverbs] chap. 8 but has a different emphasis: Wisdom and her power are attributed to *Yhwh*, who, as the creator of the world, makes use of cosmotheistic knowledge (vv. 19-20)” (Bernd U. Schipper, *Proverbs 1-15: A Commentary on the Book of Proverbs 1:1-15:33*, Hermeneia, 138).

Wisdom comes from God (3:19-20) and is so important that it is presented as to be pursued like one would pursue a loving wife or mother. This formal praise of wisdom (3:13-18) is literarily called an encomium. This section has a close relationship to the broader personification of Lady Wisdom (8:1-36) and sets the stage as well for the final description in Proverbs of a virtuous woman (31:10-31). Just as one would spend considerable energy and focus upon finding an honorable spouse, so we should relentlessly search for and wed ourselves to godly wisdom!

This encomium to wisdom begins with beatitude. A person is considered “happy” or “well off” if they hunt for and gain wisdom. This word for “happy” is distinct from “blessings” in a general sense as the word is only used to describe humans who “are to be admired,” in this case for their discovery and retention of wisdom (see note v. 13). This homage to the enviable qualities of wisdom also ends with blessing as well (v. 18). A person is “happy” who finds and gains wisdom and is also “blessed” with many other adjacent benefits and qualities.

Wisdom is then ascribed great value (v. 14-16). Wisdom’s value is superlative, being even better than what can be earned (v. 14) and what would be considered rare or even supreme in one’s desire (v. 15). Wisdom is to be desired more than wealth, luxury or status.

Wisdom is then associated with long life, respect and honor (v. 16), peaceful existence (v. 17) and fruitfulness and blessing (v. 18). Some have suggested here an allusion of wisdom of being likened unto certain hieroglyphs of female Egyptian deities that held a symbol of life in the right hand and a scepter of royalty in the left hand (see note v. 16). Wisdom can give you more benefits than what wisdom itself suggests. This description of the benefits of wisdom here reads very much like the experience of Solomon himself who did not pray for wealth, power or long life, but received these blessings as a result of asking God for the chief prize of wisdom (1 Ki 3:5-15).

An earnest hunt for wisdom results in great treasure. Making wisdom’s pursuit a regular habit will make for not only a great new year but also a great new life!

Word Studies/Notes

v. 13 **blessed** “This inalienable property of 'asrê' [blessed] which is never given up even at the points of closest convergence with *bäruk* [to bless] is its absolute reservation for man, as over against objects, plants, animals, parts of man, but in comparison with *bäruk* most clearly over against any pronouncement by and application to God. We propose to explain this phenomenon by the thesis that 'asrê' is a word expressive of envious desire. This is the core significance most peculiarly its own. Praise, greeting, admonition may all be expressed through it, but only in a situation where a touch of envy is appropriate and gives them the peculiar 'asre'-flavor. We should most properly translate 'asrê hä' ts' with 'To be envied is the man . . . / 'Enviably is the situation of the man ...' It explains why 'asrê' cannot be applied to God. To the Hebrew, *Yahweh* was so essentially different from man that there was no place for aspiring to his state or situation even in a wishful way. ... 'Asrê' is spoken 'up-ward,' i.e., by one who is in a less desirable situation than the one he addresses” (Waldemar Janzen, “‘Asrê’ in the Old Testament,” *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 58, Apr., 224).

v. 13 **those** “the person ... the one. Heb. 'adam, here used for humanity in general, can also be glossed as a personal name, 'Adam.' It is unusual for the word to be used twice in a single verse of Proverbs (the only other occurrence is in 27:19, lit., 'The heart of a man reflects the man'). Whybray calls the repetition here 'surprising'. This dual occurrence draws the reader to notice the word and might convey unusual significance; perhaps it is a double entendre for humanity in general with an echo of the Garden of Eden... the section begins by citing the name of Adam twice: 'Joyful is 'adam who finds wisdom, / 'adam who gains understanding' (3:13). The wise man or woman is such an Adam partaking of the fruit of life” (George M. Schwab, *The Book of Proverbs*, in Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Vol 7, 487).

v. 13 **find/gain** “In accordance with 2:1–4, the verbs “has found” v. 13a) and “gains” v. 13b) indicate that the good favor wisdom lavishes upon its possessor is the result of an active and ongoing search. The first verb is cast in the perfect; it expresses a completed action and explains why the person is blessed: this person has found wisdom. In contrast, the second verb is cast in the imperfect; it expresses a continuing or durative action and demonstrates that the search for as well as the application of wisdom remains an ongoing process (cf. 1:5). Taken together, the verbs suggest that happiness, good favor, and blessing accompany the person who has acquired wisdom and who continues to utilize and manifest this wisdom in the various circumstances of everyday life” (Christopher B. Ansberry, *Proverbs*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the OT, 197).

v. 14 **profitable** “The words profitable and yields better returns (lit., “brings a higher yield”) are the

language of a trader or investor. What wisdom returns to her possessor is of greater value than anything gold or silver can purchase” (Sid S. Buzzell, “Proverbs,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 912).

v. 15 **more precious** “Here wisdom’s value is measured against the financial return of silver (v. 14a) and the intrinsic worth of gold (v. 14b). These comparisons highlight wisdom’s superior earnings or profit; what she produces is better than the trade value of silver and the market price of gold. The economic language identifies wisdom’s worth and desirability through the benefits she produces. In contrast, the third comparative construction moves beyond the value of wisdom’s earnings to the value of wisdom itself (v. 15a): she is more precious than “corals” ,צפירימים, v. 15a) or jewels. Her quantitative value (v. 14) corresponds to her qualitative value (v. 15a). Together, these comparative constructions set the stage for the final line of the strophe, the unqualified assertion that develops and escalates wisdom’s value (v. 15b). Nothing – neither wealth, nor jewels, nor anything else – compares with her. Wisdom is in a class of her own. She is not only incomparable in value, but she is also desirable and the fulfillment of one’s desires” (Ansberry, 198).

v. 16 **hand** “The image of wisdom holding long life (‘*ōrek yāmîm*; see 3:2) in her right hand (*bîmînāh*) and in her left (*bišmō lāh*), wealth and honor (‘*ōšer wekābôd*), according to C. Kayatz, is derived from the figure of *Ma‘at*, the Egyptian goddess of wisdom and justice. A great number of Egyptian pictorial representations show *Ma‘at*, a close Egyptian equivalent to *hokmâ* [wisdom], and other gods holding the *ankh* (“life”) sign in her left hand and the scepter, symbol of the immovability of the pillars of the heavens and of dominion, in the other. By placing life in wisdom’s right hand, however, the father gives it greater worth than wealth and honor (see Gen. 48:14; Eccl. 10:2; Matt. 25:33)” (Waltke, 258).

v. 17 **peace** “Second half of the verse intensifies the idea of the first. [Shalom] refers to the ‘well-being of the world and of humanity’ and thus goes beyond ‘being pleasant.’ The intensification here is also expressed by the use of ‘all’ in the context of the metaphor of the path. The word ‘well-being’ creates a connection with 3:2, and the plural word ‘pathways’ highlights a keyword association with Proverbs 8. According to 8:20, wisdom is connected to the paths of justice” (Schipper, 145).

v. 18 **tree of life** “Functions symbolically (and provisionally) as the ‘tree of life’ that was lost in Gen. 2:22–24. By including this metaphor with some prominence, the author makes it clear that until we reach the ‘tree of life, which is in the paradise of God’ (Rev. 2:7), we hold fast to the life-giving wisdom of the book of Proverbs and, more importantly, to Jesus Christ, who supersedes Solomon’s wisdom. The father eloquently returns to the singular *are each declared blessed* (*me‘uššār*), linking the last word of the strophe grammatically as well as lexically with its initial word” (Waltke, 260).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Passionately pursue wisdom: you will find little more valuable or more life-preserving than the treasure of wisdom.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



PARENT CONNECTION

My friend Tammy says, "You don't know what you don't know." What do you know today that you didn't know five or 10 years ago? What do you know today that you didn't know when you were the age of your child? Through the years you've gained experience and knowledge that have led you to a better understanding of how the world works. Since you've become a Christian, the teachings of the Holy Bible have opened your eyes to a right or better way to live. Chances are you learned it's better to give generously than hoard what you have like you did as a toddler. You've probably learned it's better to tell the truth than to lie like you did in kindergarten. I know you've learned how to have self-control, especially since your kids have helped you exercise this muscle on the regular. We know these things and more because we've had time to dive into God's Word. We're older, more mature and have allowed the authority of the Bible to shape our minds and the Holy Spirit deeply penetrate our hearts. Our kids haven't had that luxury. They're young, immature and self-centered little creatures with main character energy. Therefore, our job is to bring wisdom to them in a way that draws them to the Lord. Telling them not to do something (lie, cheat, steal) is behavior management. It doesn't help them understand why they need to change and completely leaves out a hunger and pursuit for righteous living that glorifies and honors the Lord. Next time your kids act like kids, love them enough to lead them to wisdom in the Lord.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Proverbs 3:13-18

1. What does the passage say about those who find wisdom?
2. What is she/her referring to in this passage?
3. What is wisdom better than in this text?

What Do You Think?

How can wisdom help you live a long life?

What Do You Do?

The book of Proverbs is full of passages that guide us toward wisdom. Draw a tree and on the leaves write the things that wisdom offers. (Ex. protection - Proverbs 4:6; understanding - Proverbs 2:6)

CORE COMPETENCY: Single-Mindedness

I pay attention to what God thinks is important for my life.

MEMORY VERSE: Micah 6:8

"He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- I completed my Bible Study
- I memorized this week's verse
- I brought my Bible to church
- I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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BIBLE CHURCH**

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.