

Sermon or Lesson: Pursue Wisdom - Part 9: Exhortative Directives For Spiritual Wisdom (NIV based)

[Lesson Question: For each verse quote below, analyze, discuss, and describe any exhortation, directive, declaration, promised result, or noteworthy characteristic that are present or implied in the verse.]

SECTION POINT: In the Scriptures, God gives exhortative directives regarding how true believers are to consider, manage, and apply spiritual wisdom in their life.

- - Ephesians 5:15 **"Be very careful, then, how you live -- not as unwise but as wise, 16. making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17.**

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is."

- - In consideration of the coming reality that "fruitless deeds of darkness" (v.5:11) will one day be "exposed by the light" (v.5:13), we true believers (v.1:1) are exhorted to therefore "be very careful how we live" (v.5:15).

- - Specifically cited here in verse 15 and as an imperative, we are to "live -- not as unwise but as wise", indicating that this kind of living is a very high priority for God that He wants to impress upon us as a very high priority to do.

- - We are "to see or look at" and ensure that we are "carefully or exactly" living in this manner that is "wise". (Strong's Greek #0991, #0199)

- - Thereby, God clearly does not approve of us living casually in whatever manner we feel like doing it - not in whatever manner that is natural, or comfortable, or worldly, or secular, or sinfully-gratifying to us. These manners of living are unwise and distinctly unacceptable to God.

- - Within our living wisely, we true believers are to "make the most of every opportunity", taking full advantage of each opportunity each "time or occasion" that one occurs, in order to implement wise courses of action that benefit various aspects of God's program and His "will". (v.16; Strong's Greek #2540; v.17)

- - A cited and motivating reason for this imperative to 'live as wise' is "because the days are evil", which implies that our 'living as wise' is to directly counter and even combat the evil that is prolifically occurring all-around us, everywhere, every "day". (v.16)

- - Therefore, this imperative to 'live as wise' is furthermore an assignment by God - to live wisely and in righteousness, amidst such evil doing.

- - This imperative and assignment is the Lord's "will" for us, His true believers, which He exhorts us to "understand", to respond to, and to consistently live by accordingly. (v.17)

- - Both our living unwise and our "being foolish" are not acceptable to God. (v.17)

- - Romans 16:19b **"...be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil."**

- - Another exhortation and directive for us true believers is to "truly" "be wise about what is good", indicating that this wisdom should be genuine, distinct, complete, thorough, rock-solid, and God-aligned. (Strong's Greek #3303, omitted in the NIV)

- - Having this wisdom in a lesser, weakened, diluted, vague, or unstable form is not acceptable to God.

- - In regard to the opposite of 'what is good', we true believers are exhorted and directed to be "innocent about what is evil", indicating that we simply are not to engage in evil - not in any amount, nor in any manner, nor at any time.
- - Our spiritual wisdom is to completely and comprehensively guide us to totally and consistently abstain from engaging in evil.
- - Therefore, if we are failing in this regard, then we need to acquire more spiritual wisdom that will motivate and guide us to and into pure and holy living.

- - Proverbs 23:19 **"Listen, my son, and be wise, and keep your heart on the right path."**

- - We true believers are instructed to "listen" to all of the exhortations and directives that come from God, of which is cited here in this verse as specifically about "being wise".

- - We are to "hear intelligently, pay attention, and respond in obedience" to this imperative and exhortation to "be wise". (Strong's Hebrew #8085)

- - When we respond in this manner, then that wisdom better equips us to successfully "keep [our] heart on the right path", "advancing" our life spiritually "in the way" of the wisdom. (Strong's Hebrew #0833, #1870)

- - As true believers who have been washed by the blood of our Lord Jesus, we have the obligation and duty to fulfill these exhortative directives and other mandates from God.

- - Of course these exhortative directives to 'listen', 'be wise', and 'keep on the right path' take devotion, effort, time, and consistency, but they are for our benefit, for the benefit of people around us, and for the benefit of God's Kingdom.

- - Proverbs 23:23 **"Buy the truth and do not sell it; get wisdom, discipline and understanding."**

- - In the Hebrew in this verse 23, the virtues of "truth", [corrective] "discipline", and "understanding" are listed equally in conjunction with "wisdom". ('corrective' - from Strong's Hebrew #4148)

- - The exhortative directive is to "buy" "the truth, wisdom, discipline, and understanding", in other words, make the "special effort" to "obtain" all four of them. (Strong's Hebrew #7069, *AHD* - 'procure')

- - This dynamic suggests that all four of these virtues not only function individually, but also function collectively - supporting, contributing to, and enhancing each of the others, resulting in multiplying their effectiveness as a whole.

- - As we true believers 'obtain' these four virtues of 'the truth, wisdom, discipline, and understanding', the exhortative directive is to furthermore "do not sell" them.

- - We have 'obtained' them, and now we are to retain them in our possession permanently - not pushing them away or rejecting them, not drifting away, ignoring, or allowing ourselves to be enticed away from them, "not forgetting or swerving from them" (v.4:5), not depreciating their value, and etcetera.

- - An implication here is that these four virtues of 'the truth, wisdom, discipline, and understanding', in combination, are worthy, valuable, and beneficial for us to utilize in every situation in our life in which they should be applied.

- - Proverbs 4:6 **"Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. 7. Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. 8. Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you."**

- - The theme in this section of verses pertains to our developing several high regards for spiritual wisdom, which are contained within exhortations and declarations of accompanying promises of correspondingly experiencing benefits in return.

- - In verse 6, we true believers are exhorted and directed to "do not forsake wisdom" - not "abandon", not "relinquish", not "loosen" our grip on our possession and usage of spiritual wisdom.

- - In return to doing these 'not forsake' actions successfully, spiritual wisdom "will protect [us]", which carries the meaning in the sense of "projecting a hedge of thorns around us in guarding and protecting us". (v.6; Strong's Hebrew #8104)

- - If we develop "love and affection" for spiritual wisdom and its use in our life, the promise is that correspondingly the result from that regard and usage likewise will be the "maintaining of guarding and protecting" us from harm in our life. (v.6; Strong's Hebrew #5341)

- - In verse 7 is a simple yet profound declaration: "wisdom is supreme" - "the first, in place, or time, or order, or rank". (Strong's Hebrew #7225)

- - Spiritual wisdom has such great value and great effectiveness when put to use properly, that it is regarded by God as 'supreme' for the life of His true believers.

- - Because of this potential of spiritual wisdom to produce great beneficial results in the lives of its users, the exhortation is given for us to "get wisdom".

- - Coupled along side this exhortation to 'get wisdom' is given the exhortation "with all your getting, get understanding". (from Strong's Hebrew #3605, #7076, #7069, #0998)

- - This coupling of 'get understanding' to 'get wisdom' suggests that spiritual understanding is crucial to the effective usage of spiritual wisdom.

- - In other words, in order to use spiritual wisdom, we need to understand it, which means that we need to pursue both spiritual wisdom and spiritual understanding simultaneously.

- - In verse 8 is the exhortation to "esteem" spiritual wisdom, to "exalt, elevate, and glorify it with praise and honor", "regarding it with a high opinion of respect, appreciation, affection, and admiration, that it deserves". (Strong's Hebrew #5549; *AHD* - 'exalt', 'esteem')

- - When we true believers 'exalt' and hold such high 'esteem' for spiritual wisdom, then naturally we will seek out as much of it as we can, "embrace" it, and put it to use as often as we can, thereby creating very beneficial results that in return "will exalt [us]" personally and "will honor [us]" personally. (v.8)

- - So in verses 6 and 8 is being conveyed a sense of a reciprocating effect - when we develop and initiate positive high regard and usage of spiritual wisdom, in return it produces positive substantially-beneficial results that come back upon us personally.

- - Obviously, God has designed spiritual wisdom and spiritual understanding to perform in this reciprocating manner, as incentive and blessing for true believers.

- - Proverbs 3:21 **"My son, preserve sound judgment and discernment, do not let them out of your sight;"**

- - As spiritual wisdom is applied in various kinds of situations in the life of each of us true believers, evidence will accumulate to form and constitute a kind of track record as

to the "actual performance, accomplishments", and results that the spiritual wisdom produced. (AHD - 'track record')

- - Thereby, the spiritual wisdom becomes "substantiated or supported" by the evidence that it is "sound" or credible in its "judgment", "wisdom, and intellectual understanding". (Strong's Hebrew #8454, with AHD - 'substantiate')

- - The track record will also contain information on "discernment" or "keen insight, good judgment, and intellectual power to decide wisely", and information on "discretion" or "intelligent good judgment in practical matters", which obviously are core components of spiritual wisdom. (AHD - 'discernment'; Strong's Hebrew #7922, AHD - 'discretion')

- - In this verse 21 is the exhortation to "preserve", "keep, guard, protect, and attend to" the track record that accumulates as to the results that using spiritual wisdom has produce in the believer's life. (Strong's Hebrew #8104)

- - Over the course of time as we true believers experience substantiated credible results from using spiritual wisdom, we are to remember those excellent results, guarding and protecting them from becoming distorted, or degraded, or extinguished.

- - And when we encounter difficulties and situations in life in which spiritual wisdom should be applied, we are then to readily recall those past results from our track record and keep them in our mind, in "[our] sight", as we proceed into and through those difficulties and situations in life.

BIG IDEA: The exhortative directives from God regarding spiritual wisdom need to be obeyed and implemented by true believers, in order for those believers to then receive reciprocated corresponding benefits from that spiritual wisdom.

APPLICATIONS:

- - In the Scriptures, when God exhorts you to do or not do something, what is your response? Do you readily comply?

- - Or instead, do you ignore or dismiss His exhortative directives?

- - Or perhaps you initially respond with agreeability and with the intention to implement His directives, but then later you get caught up in the busyness of life and proceed to forget about that directive from God?

- - Now that you have heard in this study how God wants you to consider, manage, and apply spiritual wisdom in your life, how are you going to respond to that? Readily comply? Or instead, ignore, or dismiss, or forget it?

- - Having now learned about reciprocated corresponding benefits that are produced by the usage of spiritual wisdom, how are you going to respond to that?

- - Is that sufficient incentive and motivation for you to get and implement spiritual wisdom and spiritual understanding in your life?

- - Or instead, will this be another casualty of you ignoring, or dismissing, or forgetting it?

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