

MORE OF GOD, LESS OF ME

Proverbs 2

As parents, we need to remind ourselves—especially as our kids age—that they need more of God and less of me. And is not simply a parental truth—it’s a personal truth. I need more of God’s wisdom, and less of my own.

In every way, I need more of God and less of me. To be protected against sin, taught the truth, delivered from temptation—to flourish in this life, to mature emotionally and to suffer well. For you married folks, your marriage needs more of God and less of you and your opinions.

More of God, less of me. This is what the Father shows us in chapter 2. Are you ready to learn? Let’s begin with verses 1-5.

1 My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, 2 making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; 3 yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, 4 if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, 5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

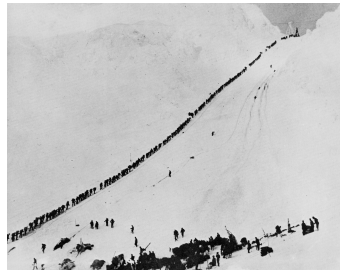
One of the bigger parenting temptations—and life temptations—is to think that people should listen to us and our wisdom. We know things, yes. We’re good at some stuff, true. Our children are commanded to listen and obey—of course. But what are you telling them? Look at what the Father tells the son, “Son,” he says, “Make knowing God your greatest priority.” You need more of God, my child, and less of me.

Don’t waste your influence on your children. It diminishes over time. Don’t just teach them how to do their eyelashes, identify trees by their leaves, conjugate verbs or memorize math facts. Point them beyond you to your God—the One whom you worship, pray to and trust with your very soul.

Jeremiah was a Jewish prophet who came about three centuries after Solomon. God spoke these words through Jeremiah, **“You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:13)** And that promise still holds. Commit your life to a whole-hearted seeking of God. God’s wisdom, God’s will, God’s plans .. more of God and less of you. The picture of these opening verses show us how learning is both passive and active—we must be actual students of God...

- **“making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding”** ... you are ready to learn.
- **“call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding”** ... you’re calling out in class because you don’t understand and want to
- **“seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures”** ... you know the tremendous value of the fear of the Lord—a right relationship with God—so you pursue it.

In 1897, 100,000 miners and prospectors came to Alaska to find the hidden treasure of gold. Look at them lined up on this snowy cliff—it’s crazy!



If only we were so hungry for the knowledge of God to forsake all other things for the Lord.

Ask God to make you a wisdom seeker. Ask God to transform your home into an academy dedicated to seeking the wisdom of God. Every parent can teach—and every child can learn. Paul Miller has written several really good books, and he often talks about his daughter Kim (tell story). Every parent can teach. Every child can learn. But you’ve got to teach more of God and less of you.

Let’s see why:

6 For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; 7 he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, 8 guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. 9 Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; 10 for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul, 11 discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you...”

This is why we need more of God and less of us—he has the wisdom and protection we need.

God teaches the upright.

“For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding...”

God speaks and teaches wisdom and knowledge to those of you who whole-heartedly seek it. The pages of Proverbs, especially chapters 10 to the end are filled with practical wisdom. But there is knowledge and understanding on every page of Scripture.

When you don’t know what to do—open the Bible in prayer and humility. If you’re not sure where to go—it is a big, ancient book, email me—I’ll point you along ... or do some searching online. “What does the Bible say about X?”

When your children ask you questions, and you’re not sure the answer—do the work together. take them with you to God’s Word. The Bible teaches so much about money, friendship, family, relationships, politics, debt, sex, power—people have been dealing with the same issues in different forms ever since the beginning of time. There’s a proverb that says, **“Lean not on your own understanding.”** Don’t be satisfied with what you “think”—listen instead to what God has said. For from his mouth comes knowledge.

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.” – Hebrews 1:1-2

God spoke first by the prophets, like Moses, Solomon and Jeremiah. But now—“In these last days”—their time has ended, for the Son has come. Now, God has spoken to us by Jesus, and everyone who has come after him, claiming to correct him, or be a greater prophet, is lying.

So, we can say more precisely, “I need more of God through Christ, and less of me. My children need more of Jesus, and less of me.”

You might be thinking: I blew it. I didn’t teach my kids hardly anything about God. Now they’re grown and they care even less than I did.

Listen, you can’t go back in time. If you failed and you know it, consider confessing that failure to your children and to the Lord. Receive God’s forgiveness and be freed from your guilt. Take your sorrow for the past and let it fill your prayers for today with tears and passion for your grown children. And as I said in an earlier sermon—put your hope in God, not your kids. God loves to save sinners—that’s why Jesus came, not for the healthy, but for the sick.

God is a teacher, but he’s also a protector for the saints.

Have you ever had to protect someone? There will come a day when you won’t be there. There will come a day when your kids won’t want your protection. Do you see why they need more of God and less of you—because our power is limited, but God’s is not.

When God is guarding your life, nothing will ultimately conquer or crush you. His grace is enough for you. That can be hard to digest in the middle of a pandemic—but it is constantly true and we need to hear it. His grace is enough for me. That’s why our children need more of God and less of us. We will never be strong enough for what they need. We’re people too, just like them. We can’t possibly be a shield to them, guarding their paths through life—but God can, and will.

Verse 10 is the key to how God protects us ... **“for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul...”**

God’s protection does not typically come in the form of miraculous interventions, but in giving you wisdom. Armed with Godly wisdom and knowledge, it says that we **“will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path,”** and because God has given us wisdom, this Godly, **“discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you...”**

Saints who are wise and value the knowledge of God taught in Scriptures show discretion and increase in understanding. They make better life choices more often (not always!) because they understand what pleases God—that’s righteousness, and what is fair toward others—that’s “justice and equity.”

We see this play out all the time, don’t we? Wise people usually suffer fewer negative consequences in life.

- They don’t spend money that they don’t have and so they’re not stressed out by debt.
- They give sacrificially.
- They quickly move to prayer.
- They don’t let false hopes—like sports, fast money, riches and fame, dominate their children’s dreams.

- They cherish regular weekly worship. They are regularly joining in worship on Sunday mornings, because they actually love the Lord and love to be with other people who love the Lord.
- They see God's hand in their physical suffering. I've gotten to listen to two different pastors who have almost died from cancer the last two years ... the suffering they have endured has wrung them dry and emptied them of almost all hope—but God has filled them up.
- Wise people see the good path of Jesus, and follow it by the power of God's grace.

What path are you on in life?

Are you satisfied with where you're going?

Are you satisfied with where you're leading your kids?

The wise path of God—the wisdom spoken of by Solomon in 850BC—is found in Jesus Christ. If the path you're on doesn't lead you to take up your cross and follow him, then you're on the wrong path.

Reflecting on his missionary work around the Mediterranean Sea, Paul wrote this in 1 Corinthians 1:22-24:

“22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

That's the truth. Do you want God's power and wisdom? Then follow Jesus and receive him into your hearts. Jesus said, **“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”** John 14:23. What do you think happens when God makes his home in our us? Wisdom comes into your hearts—just as Solomon said in verse 10. This is not the wisdom of our culture—nor was it the wisdom of Ancient Rome. I realize that.

I would argue that the wisdom of our age rests on the answer to these two questions:

1. What does the science say? (i.e. Because facts are better than opinions.)
2. Does it promote human happiness, freedom and safety? (If so, it's good. If not, it's wrong.)

The wisdom of God in Christ appears like foolishness because it answers both of these questions the “wrong way.”

“What does the science say about the death and resurrection of Jesus.” Nothing. It's a historical fact, not a scientific one. Science might say it can't happen; but that's the whole point—we know it couldn't happen, except for God's power. Because it did happen, we know Christ is the Son of God—he's not like you and I. This is not satisfying to our culture.

What about the second question: **“Does following Jesus promote human happiness, freedom and safety?”** Jesus died for the forgiveness of your sins; to bring us into God's family. Jesus rescues us from eternal hell. Ultimately, this will lead to our eternal happiness, freedom and safety.

However, before that comes, we are often inwardly troubled, because God's Spirit is often at war with our will. At times the gospel makes us very unhappy because it convicts us. At times it takes away our freedom (to do what's right in our own eyes) and summons us to obey God's will. At times, it even

threatens our safety, calling us into sacrificial love, radical forgiveness and a willingness to be persecuted. What Paul observed in 60AD is still true today: **“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” 1 Corinthians 1:18 ESV**

The wisdom of God cannot be found by asking our questions, but must be found in Jesus Christ. That’s what it means to say, **“... in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom...”** So make Christ your teacher. Make Christ your protector. Make Christ your deliverer. More of God. Less of me.

This takes us to the final sections. In these sections the Father explains the power of God’s wisdom to deliver us from intense temptations.

“... discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you...” 12 delivering you from the way of evil, from men of perverted speech, 13 who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, 14 who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil, 15 men whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways.

You and your children are surrounded by people of ‘perverted speech.’ They have left the good path and are rejoicing in evil. They have taken the crooked path—and they want you to join them. They will call out, “Do this! Get this! And you won’t get caught!” But when wisdom is in your heart, it will deliver you and your children. Wisdom will speak up, inwardly, in Scripture and sometimes through other people—warning you of the truth. You will get caught. Stay on the real path to riches, honor and life—the path of Christ.

16 So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, 17 who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God; 18 for her house sinks down to death, and her paths to the departed; 19 none who go to her come back, nor do they regain the paths of life.

Sexual temptation begins with puberty, and remains for most of your life. Other women and men will try to call you into ungodly relationships. They may be married; they may not be. They may be just on your screens or phones—but she (or he) wants you. Sexual temptation is some of the strongest we face, because it appeals to very deep physical and emotional desires.

Who will deliver you from taking the path to her house, that sinks down to death? Christ in you—the power of God and the wisdom of God. He is and must be our deliverer. That’s why we need more of God, less of us. He will fight for you, and equip you to stand. He will forgive you when you fail, and bring about a spirit of sorrow and repentance which is good for you. Christ has made us more than conquerors—and always provides a way of escape from temptation. Wisdom shows us the way.

So we conclude with this final promise, made to those who receive the wisdom of God:

20 So you will walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous. 21 For the upright will inhabit the land, and those with integrity will remain in it, 22 but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.”