

This is the Way

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[0 : 00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Shine Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's word to you today.

A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're filling seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to look at what God has to say to us in his word because we believe that God has something to say to everyone.

He has something to say to people who've been Christians their entire lives. He's been something to say to people who've been Christians for a very short amount of time, and he has something to say, a challenge, to people who are not Christians.

God's word gives us life. God's word gives us life.

[1 : 24] We've been talking about a lot of different concepts about wisdom from chapter one. At this point, hopefully you're convinced that wisdom is something you want. Hopefully you're convinced that wisdom is something you need if you're going to walk well in this life.

And so that raises our next question here with chapter two, which is how we continue in wisdom. One man puts it this way, that chapter two asks the question, how do we grow?

If we know that we need wisdom and now we want wisdom, how is it that we become wise people?

What we saw last week was negative, right? It was a warning to those who won't listen. This week in chapter two, it's going to be positive. It's going to tell us what it actually looks like to be people who become wise.

And so it's with that that we're going to turn to Proverbs chapter two and reading the entire chapter. I invite you to turn in your worship guide. It's near the end of there. You can turn in your Bible or your phone.

[2 : 24] No matter where you turn, the importance is that we are here together in this chapter of God's word. Now, I have not done this in probably a year or so, but I'm going to ask you this morning to take a look and see if you can spot some words that are repeated frequently in this passage.

It's tempting sometimes when we read God's word to just kind of turn our minds off while we're reading it, get to the end, and then we wait, you know, until the preacher says the first illustration. And I get that.

It's a temptation for me as well. But there's a word here that's going to be repeated six times, and I'm going to challenge you to see if you can find it. Also, it's not an article, right? Don't tell me the word is the or a or an.

With that, we are in Proverbs chapter 2. This is God's word. Remember that God tells us in Proverbs chapter 30, verse 5, that every word of God proves true.

He is a shield to those who take refuge in him. And so that's why we read now, starting at chapter 2. My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding.

[3 : 36] Yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding. If you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

Verse 6. For the Lord gives wisdom. From his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright.

He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. Verse 9. Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path.

For wisdom will come into your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Discretion will watch over you. Understanding will guard you, delivering you from the way of evil, from men of perverted speech, who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil, men whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways.

Verse 16. So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God.

[5 : 01] For her house sinks down to death and her paths to the departed. None who go to her come back, nor do they regain the paths of life. Verse 20.

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

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Amen. Our Father in heaven, we praise you and thank you again that you have not left us alone as orphans in a merciless universe.

You've not abandoned us to our own devices to figure out how this world works, but instead you have come and you've given us your word. You've spoken clearly to us so that we would not be lost or confused, but we would know the way to walk in this world.

We ask that you would do that now this morning by your spirit, that you would help us, that you would speak clearly to us, and that we would hear and believe and know everything that you've written in your word.

[6 : 18] We ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. If you are a Star Wars fan of any sort, you know that at the end of last year, The Mandalorian came out, which tells us the story after episode six.

It's about five years after the return of the Jedi, so Darth Vader has turned good again. It tells the story of a man named Din, and Din's a bounty hunter, and as a bounty hunter, he belongs to this group called the Mandalorians.

They're a tribe or a clan, and this tribe or clan is from the planet of Mandalore. And there's this phrase that they repeat over and over that characterizes how they work as a tribe or a clan.

You all know what this is? This is the way. Yeah, over and over they say, this is the way, except it sounds more like this. This is the way. And it's something that they repeat to describe what their pattern of life is, the way that they live in the world.

And one of the things that's important for them as they live is that they never take off their helmet in front of a living human being. And so they have this code that they live by, this way that they walk.

[7 : 33] They're loyal to it, and they have allegiance to it. And it's something that they love, and this love also brings them great protection. You know, for example, that when Din gets into trouble, he's rescued baby Yoda, and there are other bounty hunters that are coming after him.

Who comes to protect him? Well, it's the other Mandalorians. Because he loves the way, the way also protects him.

And that's what we're going to see here in this chapter about Proverbs. We're going to see the love for the path and protection by the path.

I told you to look out for repeated words. There's actually many repeated words, so I may have played a little bit of a trick on you. But the word that appears six times is what? Ooh, different answers.

Okay, wisdom potentially. What I was looking for was the path. The path appears six times. We see it in verses eight and nine.

[8 : 34] It's where it first shows up. The paths of justice. Verse nine, every good path. We have it in verse 13. So there's a good path and an evil path. There are those who forsake the paths of uprightness.

The way appears, by the way, too. So the word way, not six times, but it appears a lot. The way of evil, verse 12. We have verse 18. This forbidden woman, she has paths that go down to the departed.

Verse 19. No one who goes down regains the paths of life. So I've hinted at this theme before in the book of Proverbs, and it's highlighted even more in this chapter.

There are two paths or two ways. There's not three, which is what our world often tells us, right? There's three ways. There's really wicked people, really good people, and really normal, average people.

Proverbs tells us, actually, there's only two. There's people who fear the Lord and people who don't. There is a path that we have to walk on in this life. And so path and way here show up over and over again.

[9 : 40] So there's love for the path that we see in this passage and also protection by the path. We see at the very beginning of this chapter, similar to what I told you last week. Remember, I gave you the illustration of the river guide or the hunting guide that illustrates for us what wisdom looks like.

Wisdom is like a guide offering to show us the way, and all we have to do is listen and accept. There's no charge or fee. Wisdom doesn't charge us money. We don't have to pay anything for wisdom.

Wisdom also gives us everything we need. This guide is bringing along all the supplies. It's like a fly fishing guide who's gonna bring all the things that you need to fly fish. It's like a hunting guide who brings all the guns that you need.

That's what we saw last week. At the end of chapter one, we saw in verse 23, I will pour out my spirit to you. I will make my words known to you. Wisdom gives you everything that you need.

That's the same thing we see here in chapter two, the very beginning. My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments within you, yes, listen.

[10 : 44] If you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, listen, the same thing we saw last week. Verses six and seven, the Lord gives wisdom from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

God's the one providing the wisdom. He gives all the supplies. He gives everything needed. Verse seven, he stores up sound wisdom for the upright. He is a shield to those who walk in integrity. All you have to do is listen.

God provides all the wisdom. And yet there's something added in this section. There's a catch. Verses three and four. There seems to be something more than just listening.

If you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord. And if you're listening carefully, you might think, wait, I thought you told us last week that all we had to do was listen.

Isn't this adding another obligation? This sounds difficult and hard. I thought it wasn't pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps to get to wisdom. I thought wisdom was going to give us everything that we need. The answer is yes.

[11 : 53] And we still have to love it and want it. Yes. And we still have to love it and want it. You can have a river guide offering to take you fishing for free, supplying everything that you need.

And if you hate fishing, it doesn't matter how free it is. You can have someone who offers to take you hunting, supplying everything you need, bringing all the guns and the ammunition, knowing the best spots.

And if you hate hunting, it doesn't matter. Verse three and four, you have to call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding.

You have to seek for it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures. In other words, you have to love wisdom. It's not enough to just be offered wisdom.

You have to love wisdom. Wisdom involves our hearts and our love. That's, of course, the language that's used here. What is it if it's treasure? It must be something you really value.

[13 : 02] You can't treat wisdom like treasure unless you believe it is a treasure, unless you love it. It's an issue of the heart. Verse two, your ear has to be attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding.

Verse 10, it has to be something that's pleasant to you. Wisdom will come into your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

You will love wisdom. Wisdom is something that will taste sweet and beautiful to you. It's not just that someone's offering to take you fishing. It's that you love fishing. It's your favorite thing. It's not just that someone's offering to take you hunting.

It's that you love hunting. It's your favorite thing. It's not just that wisdom is crying out that we saw at the end of chapter one. It's not just that it offers these things, but that you love it. Your heart wants wisdom.

There's a love for wisdom that has to be true if we want it. Remember, by the way, we've seen this idea of love before in chapter one. If you have your Bible with you, chapter one, verse 12, sorry, 22, chapter one, verse 22, there's the challenge from last week to the simple.

[14 : 14] How long, oh simple ones, will you love being simple? Not just a matter of listening. It's a matter of our loves.

It's a matter of what our hearts want and desire. And so our application is this. We have to love wisdom if we want to get wisdom. We have to say yes to the offer of wisdom from chapter one and say yes enthusiastically.

Chapter two is asking us, what is our treasure? What is it that we seek after and want more than anything else?

A righteous person, a person who fears the Lord, longs to know God and follow after his ways. Wisdom is a relationship, not a strategy.

Wisdom is a relationship, not a strategy. We talked last week about many things you can get from wisdom. You can't be interested in wisdom, though, just for what you can get.

[15 : 17] It can't be a strategy. It has to be something that you actually love. Wisdom has to be something that moves your heart. There are some things, we know this intuitively, just in the world, there are some things that can only be had if we love and treasure them.

Right? This is how relationships work. Think, for example, if you're a young man and you're interested in a young woman, it would not be a good idea for you to go to her and say something like this.

You know, I don't hate the idea of spending time with you. I haven't thought about you much recently, but I lost my job, so I just had a lot of time to think. And I don't have a lot of hobbies, so I just have a lot, you know, I have space.

So if you would like to spend time with me, I'd be open to that. Is she gonna say yes? No, it's not a winning strategy.

Things that are relational, that involve relationships, can only be acquired through love and affection. This is true, not just in romantic situations, but in our families and our friendships. Wisdom is the same way.

[16 : 28] Wisdom is a relationship, not a strategy. It's not a coincidence that this book, written to a young man, presents wisdom as a woman. She is crying out for relationship.

We have to love wisdom if we want to get wisdom. The man approaches the woman, right, because he's interested. He thinks it's worth the risk. He thinks there might be some treasure there.

That's the successful strategy. That's the same way with wisdom. In the Mandalorian, by the way, Din, he's not just with the Mandalorians because of what he can get.

Remember, they rescued him as a child. There's a relationship there. There's history there. There's a reason that he refuses to take off his helmet.

It's not just a strategy. It's a relationship. That's the love for the path.

[17 : 32] We also see in chapter 2 the protection of the path. The path is similar to what we saw last week. It's put positively here rather than last week it was put negatively.

The path offers real and present protection from danger. We see that in verses 7 and 8. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright. He is a shield to those who walk in integrity.

What does a shield do? Protects you. Verse 8, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. There's a protection.

God is watching over and guarding. Wisdom is watching over and guarding people who love it. Now this works in several ways. You can think of a compass, right? The fear of the Lord shows us the way to go when things around us are confusing.

It directs us no matter what our culture is saying. So it's a compass protecting us. We could also think of it as people in this world being like kites being blown around by the breeze, right?

[18 : 36] If a kite is not tied to anything it'll blow wherever the wind goes. Wisdom protects us by tying us down. It creates limits.

It makes sure we can only soar in certain areas. And so wisdom's a protection in those ways but it's actually more than that. Verse 10, we're told that we will love wisdom.

Knowledge will be pleasant to our soul. And it's this knowledge being pleasant that serves as the true protection and gives us two situations as examples here. First, this love is going to deliver us from evil ways.

That's verses 12 through 15. This again is similar to what we saw in chapter 1. Remember in chapter 1 verses 10 through 19 we saw the temptation to violence.

There are going to be violent men who come to you and they're going to offer you things. There's going to be unjust gain. There's going to be opportunities to become rich at other people's expense. There's a warning there in chapter 1.

[19 : 37] There's something even more than this. What's going to protect you from those offers? It's going to have to be your love of wisdom ultimately. Someone comes offering you an opportunity to become rich at other people's expense.

If your love of money is greater than your love of wisdom, what's going to win? Ultimately, your love is going to be what wins. Worldview, which people like to talk about a lot, is knowing the right thing to do.

Love is actually going to be doing the right thing. Worldview, we know God's commandments. Love is what has us actually keep those commandments. In that moment, when the temptation comes, the question really is, what do you love more?

These violent men, verses 12 through 15, are going to offer you many things. They're going to offer you money. They might offer you power. They might offer you fame and wealth.

Those things will be very attractive. It's your love that will protect you. It's your love of wisdom that will keep you safe.

[20 : 52] It's your love that will allow you to say no even when the offer is tempting. Same thing is shown for us in verses 16 through 19.

It's not just men who will come to offer you things. Women here will come and offer this young man things. There's going to be a woman who is going to tempt him. She's going to come, verse 16, with smooth words.

She's going to appeal to his love. She might flatter him, tell him things he's been longing to hear for a long time, filling needs that he didn't know that he had. It's going to be his love that protects him.

Now, the temptation to evil speech is one thing. The temptation to sexuality is even more powerful, the temptation of sex.

We can have the right worldview, but if we're not motivated by love, wisdom can't protect us. Because, verse 16, she's going to offer these smooth words, right?

[21 : 56] She's going to offer experiences and things that we might long for. And if we don't love wisdom, if we don't love God and love our neighbor at best, we're going to try to get as close to the line as we can without doing something wrong.

At worst, we're going to realize we love something more than wisdom. And wisdom is simply a nuisance. And so, in the moment of temptation, wisdom will lose and the forbidden woman will win.

And so, instead, we have to love God and love others. If wisdom is not a delight to us, if it doesn't come into our heart, verse 10, if it's not pleasant to our soul, then verse 11, it's not going to be possible for understanding to guard us.

we have to love the path to be protected by the path. We have to fight desire with desire. By the way, that's what we're going to see later on in chapter 5.

That's one of the solutions that the author of Proverbs gives to sexual temptation, to fight one desire with an even greater and better desire. And that is going to be protection, right?

[23 : 11] Because the Father here tells us what happens if we love the forbidden woman more than wisdom. Verse 18, her house sinks down to death and her paths to the departed.

None who go to her come back, nor do they regain the paths of life. Wisdom will protect you from death. By the way, this gives us an important point here.

As we think about sin and temptation, especially as we think about talking about it with our children, children, this by the way, remember is a book to children, the book of Proverbs that's written to a young man, an adolescent male, it is good and right to warn about the consequences of sin.

The author of Proverbs does that, did that last week. But if all we're concerned about is the consequences of sin, ultimately wisdom cannot protect us.

We cannot warn just about the dangers of disobedience, but we also have to talk about the fact that we must love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Remember, worldview is knowing what's right.

[24 : 17] It's our love that causes us to do what's right. In Deuteronomy chapter 6, which is the portion of the Bible that talks about training our children up and raising them to fear and know the Lord all the time, it tells us in verse 5, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

It is love for God and his wisdom that will guard us. It's a greater affection that protects us from lesser affections.

And so we must love wisdom to be protected by wisdom. As I've been telling you now many weeks, Matthew chapter 12, verse 42, tells us that Jesus is the great teacher of wisdom.

He is greater than Solomon. And so Jesus tells us some similar things. He tells us in John chapter 14, verse 15, if you love me, you will keep my commandments.

He tells us in Matthew chapter 22 that the law is summarized in this way. Love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself. That's the heart of what Jesus teaches.

[25 : 30] When Jesus meets with Nicodemus in John chapter 3 and Nicodemus wants to know how can he receive what it is that Jesus offers. He tells Nicodemus you have to be born again. And that gets to one of the answers that this passage raises which is this, if we have to love wisdom to be protected by wisdom, how can we love wisdom more than anything else?

Well as we saw last week, Colossians chapter 2, verse 3, it's in Jesus that we see all wisdom. And so it's in loving Jesus that we're able to have new and changed hearts.

That's what Jesus is offering Nicodemus in John chapter 3. Unless you're born again, unless the Holy Spirit is part of your life, unless Jesus is coming and making a new creation out of you, you have no expectation that your heart will be changed by love to do and know what is right.

Wisdom is not a strategy, it's a relationship, and it's a relationship ultimately with Jesus Christ. He is the one who gives us new hearts, hearts that love him and wisdom more than anything else.

And so Proverbs chapter 2 is not a chance for us to try to whip up some kind of frenzy where we can be disciplined enough, where we can have a habit tracker so we can keep track of our wisdom practices.

[26 : 56] But ultimately it's a passage telling us that it's a matter of the heart and we as people of the New Testament know that it's only Jesus who can change our hearts. And so our first step is to pray to God that he would send his spirit, that he would soften our hearts, and that he would give us new hearts, that we are the kind of people who love wisdom more than anything else, that we would love the Lord our God with our heart and our soul and all our might.

That's ultimately what Proverbs chapter 2 points us to. That is how we grow in wisdom and become people of wisdom. Of course, the gospel tells us that as we pursue wisdom, it's Jesus who pursued us first.

Romans chapter 5, verse 8, tells us, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And so our pursuit of wisdom only comes after Jesus' pursuit of us.

He is the one who comes and changes hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. We come again then this week over and over. The book of Proverbs is pointing us to Jesus.

He is the one who has wisdom come into our heart and makes knowledge pleasant to our soul. He is the one, verse 7, who's a shield to those who walk in integrity.

[28 : 20] And he's the one in verse 8 who watches over the way of his saints. And so he's the one who gives us the love of wisdom and he's the one who gives us the protection of wisdom.

25 years after the Mandalorian, of course, we're told a different story in episode 7. The Galactic Empire has been defeated and they've been replaced by the First Order.

The rebellion is still working but Luke Skywalker has disappeared. And Leia wants to find him, right? And RTD2 and BB8 have a map to Luke and so there's this journey to go find him and at the end, after all this work to protect the map and keep the map out of their love for Luke and their love for the rebellion, they finally find him on an isolated island, right?

All they have to do is find Luke. All they have to do is pursue him because he provides everything else. In episodes 8 and 9, he trains Rey in the force.

He teaches her what she needs to know so that she can go and do battle. He fights Kylo Ren to buy time for the resistance. He lays himself down so that they can escape.

[29 : 45] Luke, out of his love, battles for them, right? He protects them from death. He allows them to live. And then in episode 9, The Force Awakens, he gives Rey Leia's lightsaber and he gives Rey his starfighter.

He gives her everything that she needs to return and do battle. All she had to do was seek him out and find him. Luke gives her what she needs.

He prepares her and trains her. And he also lays himself down to protect the rebellion. Brothers and sisters, all we have to do is go after wisdom.

All we have to do is love the path, love Jesus Christ, and we also will be protected by the path. We will be protected by Jesus Christ.

Please pray with me. Our Father in Heaven, we thank you for your word. We ask that you would use it in a powerful way to change our hearts, that we would grow in our love for you.

[31 : 02] That you would make wisdom a treasure to us in something that's sweet. We confess that we can't do it on our own and that we need your spirit to do a new work in our hearts. And so we ask that you would do that now, that you would take our hard hearts and that you would soften them, that we would be eager for your wisdom and your ways.

We ask these things not because we have earned them or deserve them, but we ask them in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.