

Proverbs 22-09-14a

Welcome to the Wednesday night Bible study at Grace & Truth Bible Church. This is the 14th of September, 2022. We're in the book of Proverbs, starting chapter two.

Proverbs chapter two. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and investigation, and we'll begin. Father, what a privilege it is for us to have access to your word, to have our own copy of it, to be able to peruse it anytime we choose, to have wonderful resources, helps, commentaries, in a way never before seen in the history of the world.

There has never been a time where your truth for us is more accessible, more immediately available. And we thank you for that. And we pray that as we exercise those privileges tonight, that your Holy Spirit will give us understanding, give us the wisdom that you have promised as we value and treasure and hide away in our hearts this wonderful communication from your very throne.

We thank you for the Lord Jesus, and we pray that our time of fellowship and our future application and pursuit of those ways that are pleasing in your sight will bring glory to him and to you. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. Let's read our passage.

It should be familiar since I think everybody within the sound of my voice memorized this back in the days when we were practicing our memory verses. I still treasure those things that come to my mind in a time of need. Proverbs 2, verse one through however far we get.

My son, if you receive my words and treasure my commands within you so that you incline your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding. Yes, if you cry out for discernment and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom, from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding.

He stores up sound wisdom for the upright. He is a shield to those who walk uprightly. He guards the paths of justice and preserves the way of his saints.

Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path. That's verses one through nine. I seriously doubt I will be able to get further than that, but I hope to cover the majority of it tonight with you.

So let's begin at the beginning. We have the translation here. My son, this is Ben with the possessive, first person singular possessive, my son.

This is most likely Solomon rehearsing words that he got from his father, David. My son, if you take in, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands with you. The

progression of verbs is something that we've looked at many times.

I'm not going to belabor that, but if you haven't already done so, I think it is helpful to circle these in your Bible and note the increasing intensity of the expression of appreciation and dedication that you find in these verbs. So we begin, as we've seen many times, with receiving and treasuring, treasuring my commands with you. This is a great verb.

It is used in many places. This is the verb in Hebrew that means to hide or treasure up. It is tzafan, T-S-A-P-H-A-N, tzafan.

And there are derived words that are quite interesting if you want to Google tzafan sometime, but we don't have time to look at that right now. This is the word that was used in Exodus 2.2. Now, before you turn there, think about the geography of the book of Exodus. What's going on in chapter one of Exodus? We're picking up the story after Genesis 50, after the death of Joseph and he is interred.

And the last words of Genesis are what? First words of Genesis, in the beginning God created. Last words of Genesis, in a coffin in Egypt. Remember that? So where does Exodus pick up? Just think, draw on your extensive exposure.

We're now a few hundred years later and what is the status of the descendants of Jacob? They started out as 70 that went down to Egypt under Joseph's protection and provision. They have multiplied to become a great people, but the Egyptians have become afraid and they are now in hard bondage. They're worried that they're gonna rise up and insurrect.

So what do they do? Tell the midwives, kill the male children, right? So at the beginning of Exodus chapter two, you have a particular male child who is born. And that child of course is Moshe. And in Exodus chapter two, verse two, when his mother sees that he is beautiful, she hid him for three months.

The word hide is our word, Safan. Safan, this is to protect something, to value it and to hide it away. Exodus chapter two, verse two.

In the next verse that our verb is used again, but when she could hide him no longer, she took him and placed him in the basket and the bulrushes episode ensues. The next time we find this verb is Joshua chapter two, verse four. Once again, you think about the geography of Joshua.

This is when the people are gonna enter the land under the leadership of Joshua. You have the two men who go into Recon and there is some stir and so Rahab hides them. And it's this word.

So Moses' mother hiding him, Rahab hiding the spies. There are many instances of this

verb in Job, but I only want to direct our attention to one and that is Job 23, 11 and 12. I have this emblazoned on a t-shirt or two and those t-shirts are something that I don't hide, I wear because I love these verses.

But you remember when we learned this in the King James Bible, Job 23, 11 and 12. Job is longing for God's presence. And he says, my feet have followed in his tracks or my foot hath held his steps as you have it in the King James.

His way have I kept and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips. I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

And the word translated esteemed is safan, it's our verb. I have treasured, I have hidden away as valuable and in need of protection, the words of his mouth. I have treasured them more than my necessary food.

I have internalized them with a greater priority than my daily meals. So this is our word in Proverbs chapter two. My son, if you receive my words and hide them away, treasure them, value them within you so that, and so you've got circled there, receive and treasure, hide away.

And I would just put out beside that, Moses, Joshua, Job, or Moses, Rahab, if it's more helpful to remember. And incline your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding. Now you have more intensity.

To incline your ear, this is a more active mode than simply listening and tucking away, right? Inclining the ear is to heed, it is to hearken. The first use of this verb is in 1 Samuel chapter 15, verse 22, where Samuel is talking to Saul. Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to heed than the fat of rams.

This is kashav, Q-A-S-H-A-V. It's a soft B, kashav or kashav. And to heed, to incline the ear, this of course means more than simply tolerate hearing something.

It is to incline your ear favorably with a view toward doing it. To obey is better than sacrifice and to heed is better than the fat of rams. So it isn't just hearing without internalizing.

This is taking an active interest in living out those words, heeding. That's 1 Samuel 15, 22. There's another interesting instance of this in 2 Chronicles chapter 20, when the spirit of the Lord comes upon Jehaziel, the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jael, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite from Asaph's descendants, as he stood in the midst of the assembly.

And he said, listen, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem. Listen, King Jehoshaphat. This is what the Lord says.

Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army, for the battle does not belong to you, but to God. Tomorrow you are to march down against them. You will see them coming on the ascent of Zeez.

You will find them at the end of the valley of the wilderness of Jeruel. You need not fight this battle. Take up your positions, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.

Do not be afraid or discouraged. Go out and face them tomorrow, for the Lord is with you." That word of deliverance, that word that calls for obedience, is prefaced with our verb. Listen, all you people of Judah.

Listen, all you people of Jerusalem. This is kashav, Q-A-S-H-A-V. That's what it means to heed.

That's what it means to incline your ear. Pay attention. A call to action follows.

And the listening with the intention of hearing and heeding the call to action is all wrapped up in this. This is why Hebrew is such a beautiful language. There's so much in a single word, and all of that is bound up in this verb.

To incline your ear to wisdom. You listen to it with the intention of finding the call to action and carrying it out. Kashav.

You incline to wisdom your ear. The object of heeding is given at a point of emphasis so that you incline to wisdom your ear is the word order. And then apply your heart to understanding.

Those words are in that order. And the word apply is natah, N-A-T-A-H. And it means to stretch out, to extend, to reach out.

It is used of pitching tents. In Genesis chapter 12, it talks about Abraham pitching his tent east of Bethel to stretch out a tent, to stretch out your encampment, to take everything that you've had packed up for a journey and you're in a caravan and you unpack and you stretch it out. It was used in Genesis 24, 14, when Abraham's servant is looking for a wife for Isaac, for Yitzhak.

And in Genesis 24, 14, the servant says to Rebecca, please let down your pitcher, let down your jar and draw water for me and my animals. Let down, stretch out, extend the jar to where the water is. And so if we are extending and stretching out our heart for understanding, this takes some effort.

Tents don't pitch themselves. Pitchers, jugs, well buckets, don't drop down, fill themselves and come back up. This takes some effort.

That's the verb for apply your heart to understanding. Then in verse three, if you cry out

for discernment, but the first word in this verse is key, K-I-Y. And this is used as an intensive and it means, so they've translated it here, yes, but that's a little bit weak.

This means indeed or surely when used in this way. When it comes at the beginning of a sentence, I think a good translation is surely. Surely if you cry out and once again, you have the object put first, just as in the preceding verse.

So surely if for discernment, you cry out, and this is our common word for calling out loudly, crying out, it's K-A-R-A, Q-A-R-A. Surely if for discernment, you cry out. For understanding, you lift up your voice.

The word translated here for understanding and it's often coupled with wisdom. Wisdom and understanding go together. This is the word bina and it is from bean, but it is consideration.

You don't just know a thing, but you can draw conclusions from it. You can make proper evaluations based on it. If you know the value of a one ounce gold coin, that's knowledge.

If you understand the power of what 1800 odd dollars will buy. Last time I checked, I think that was the going rate for an ounce of gold somewhere in the 18s. But understanding would be, I've got various needs.

I've got various opportunities. I could invest. I could convert from one form of investment to another.

I could satisfy a debt. I could purchase something that I need with this coin. That would be understanding, to recognize what the possibilities are.

Bina is the process of considering those and prioritizing them. This is understanding in the sense of discerning what would be good, better, or best. Do you see the facets that are revealed by these words? You can have facts at your disposal and facts are great, but facts alone don't help you make a good decision.

A lot of people that possess the very same facts make wildly different decisions. Understanding is what potential decisions can be made. What are the options? To weigh, evaluate, and prioritize those options, this is bina.

So you receive God's words and treasure His commands. And back up in verse one, I didn't really talk about this, but the word command there, these are the mitzvot. The singular of mitzvot is mitzvah.

Are you familiar with this word? Have you ever heard it before? Where have you heard mitzvah? Bar mitzvah, bat mitzvah, right? What does that mean exactly? You think, well, let's see, what do I know about bar mitzvah? I think a young lad who is Jewish, when he

reaches the age of 13, he has his bar mitzvah. We understand Simon bar Jonah, bar is son of. So what is mitzvah? Mitzvah in the singular means command.

In the plural, it is commands or commandments. So bar mitzvah means son of command or son of commandment. Interesting, it's not bar mitzvot, it's bar mitzvah.

And it's interesting because I think most of us who are not really steeped in Jewish culture don't know how biblical or traditional this bar mitzvah is. Let me just give you very quickly that in the Bible, the age at which a man is accountable when he can go to war and can be taxed is 20. In the times of the Talmud, that age was lowered to 13.

It's not biblical, it's Talmudic. You remember Talmud is the Mishnah and the Gemara together make up Talmud. But they moved the age to 13.

And this is just the opinions of rabbis that have been collected and collated and compared one to the other in Talmud. But the tradition of the father pronouncing a blessing at that point began in the middle ages. And it wasn't until the 16th century that they actually attached a ceremony to this.

And the ceremony involved, up to that point, young boys earlier in age, they could be just old enough to read, old enough to speak, old enough to do what they're told or to stand up and be heard. As soon as they were mentally fit, they could be called up to say blessings over the Torah at the reading during worship in synagogue or at feast gatherings and such. And so any boy could be called up to pronounce the blessings over the Torah and could wear the tefillin, which are the phylacteries wrapped around your head and arm for morning prayers and such.

But they began to restrict this during medieval times and say, well, no, you can't do that until you're 13. And actually, then they got real nitpicky and said, you can't do it until the day after you're 13, because what if your birthday falls on a Sabbath? So you cannot have a Sabbath birthday and do it on your birthday. Your birthday had to be yesterday and so on.

Anyway, everything associated with bar mitzvah, bat mitzvah, especially in the modern day, the celebrations and all of the accouterments is all no more than 400 or 500 years old in terms of tradition. There's none of that in the Bible. There's no special recognition given.

Simply at the age of 20, you were draftable and taxable. That's all the Bible has to say about it. But the son of the command is a completely made up rabbinic invention.

So as far as that goes, I just give you that because we've got the word mitzvah here, but it simply means commands. And why is it that we treasure the commands? This is what the exhortation leads with. If you receive my words and treasure my commands, all of this is aimed toward obedience.

If you treasure my thoughts, that would be a different concept. If you treasure my revelations, if you treasure my prophecies, if you treasure my comforts, if you treasure my promises, if you treasure my principles, if you treasure my doctrines, none of those words are used. If you hide away as valuable my commands, my mitzvot.

Why? If you treasure God's expressions of what he wants me to do, wants you to do. The outcomes, hide those away, treasure them. This is the leading edge of this whole exhortation, this whole encouragement.

If you receive my words and treasure my commands of all possible things, it is the commands that matter. So if you cry out for discernment and lift up your voice for understanding and that discernment, this is our Binah word, and then cry out and for understanding, you lift up your voice. What is the word understanding? This is the word tabon and this is actually from bin.

It is a variation on the word bin. And it is reasoning. It's another facet of the same idea, but it results, it looks at the result.

If you have bin or binah, understanding, then you are going to be skillful. And so it is the, binah is your prioritization, your thinking, your understanding, and weighing the options. Then you're tiven, tiven, but this word is looking at the outcome.

It reminds me of an aggressive aorist and a culminative aorist, where one emphasizes the beginning of a process and the other emphasizes the end or the result. Same thing here, you have, if you are crying out for the understanding necessary to weigh the options, and then you are lifting up your voice for the skillful application. Once you make the decision, now I know this is what I should do.

How should I do it? It's two sides of the very same coin of understanding. Finding the best option is the beginning of that process. Carrying out and implementing that option is the other side.

So that is verse three, this idea of integrating this process from beginning to end. You have God's words, you've treasured them with you. You have His commandments and you have sought them out.

You have stretched out to get them and you are committed to doing something with them. This enables you to explore the available options, to prioritize them, choose the best path, and then to carry it out. This is what you are praying for.

I had a question earlier in the week about what can we pray for? What kinds of things can we pray for? This is one thing we can pray for because it tells us to cry out and lift up our voice. The earlier things are not, they don't come by prayer. God's commands are not gonna come to us by prayer.

The understanding is not gonna come to us by prayer. God has other ways of providing that. But when it comes to choosing the best option and implementing that option, this is a matter of prayer.

That's what verse three is telling us. If you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures, this is a even further activity, even more activity, a more active approach, if you will. So if you seek her, and this is a single verb, this is bakash, B-A-Q-A-S-H.

And this means to require a thing. I must have this. It's first used in Genesis 31, 39.

And once again, if you remember the geography of Genesis, when you get to the 30s, the early 30s, this is Jacob serving for Rachel. He ends up with Leah after seven years, and he spends another seven years to pay the dowry, if you will, for Rachel. But he's talking to Laban.

And Jacob says, I have been with you. This is Genesis 31, 38. I have been with you for 20 years now.

Your sheep and your goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten the rams of your flock. I did not bring you anything torn by wild beasts. I bore the loss myself.

And you demanded payment from me for what was stolen by day or night. You required payment. You sought payment.

It's our word. So this isn't just to seek on a casual basis. This is to seek to the point of satisfaction.

I seek this. This is like when you owe a debt, and those to whom it is owed, if you don't pay them, they will get debt collectors to come after you. They will not rest until it is satisfied.

It's that kind of seeking. It's that level of seeking. So bakash.

You seek it as silver. This isn't silver you want just for profit. You're not just a miser wanting to add to the useless stacks that you're hoarding.

This, you require this. You must have it. Most people who seek silver, who seek money or compensation, do so because they need it.

I've got a mortgage. I've got a car payment. I've got groceries to buy.

I've got children to clothe and get shoes for and textbooks, and I've got expenses. And I must have the silver to meet my obligations. That's what bakash is.

If you seek her as silver, this is necessary. Remember Job, I have treasured the words of

his mouth more than my necessary food. I need this silver, and I need these words even more.

If you seek her, and it says seek her, but remember that abstract nouns are always feminine. And this is talking about the wisdom and understanding from God. And it is, remember in the preceding word, in the preceding verse rather, we had bina and another form of bina, and it is this culminating effect.

You have the words, you have the commands. You are trying to hear and heed wisdom and you are applying your heart to understanding. You're stretching your heart out for understanding, to figure out what is the application? How should I then live? And then you are crying out for bina and you are lifting up your voice for that variation on bina.

That applicational phase is what you are, seeking as silver. You're seeking bina and tabon, t-bone. The B-I-N infix, the B-N is what we're looking for there.

It's repeated twice in verse three. This is what you are seeking as silver and searching for as for hidden treasures. Hidden treasures is a wonderful word.

It only occurs a few times in the Old Testament, five times. The first time is what was hidden in the sacks of Joseph's brothers. Remember when he put treasure in their sacks? Genesis 43, 23, that was hidden treasure.

They didn't find out until they opened the bags of grain. In Job chapter three, verse 21, he says, "'Why is light given to the miserable "'and life to the bitter of soul, "'who long for death that does not come "'and search for it like hidden treasure, "'who rejoice and greatly exult "'when they can find the grave?' This is the negative example. I want to be free of this life so badly I can think of nothing else, Job 3, 21.

But I like the treasure in the sacks better because this is a positive section that we're looking at. And only the third occurrence is in our passage here in Proverbs 2, verse four. And it's used in Jeremiah 41 of stores of wheat, treasure in the field, treasures of grain in the field.

"'Search for her as for hidden treasures, "'then you will understand the fear of the Lord, "'then you will find the knowledge of God.'" What a wonderful encouragement, a great exhortation, a tremendous opportunity that is presented to us here. But it all starts with receptivity, with positivity, with response in the heart. He doesn't say you've got to go find the words of the Lord and you've got to figure out where his commandments are.

They are assumed to be present. Do you notice that in verse one? My words are already there. My commands are already there.

Just receive them, just treasure them up. You don't have to find the word. It's what you do with it after you hear it, after it is expressed.

That is the quest to seek like silver and search for hidden treasure, the application of value that begins with determining what the best option is and then the wisdom to carry it out. That's not laying on the ground. God's word and God's commands are present, but there is a process in the soul that goes on that converts the words and the commands into action.

Be not and t-bone. That's the end result. This is what James talks about when he says, be doers of the word and not hearers only.

What is the process that converts us from hearers to doers? This is it, expanded beautifully. Well, we have more to see and more to say about this when we come back from the break.