

So we're revisiting, because we are at a juncture. We're at a sort of book-hinge point in our study of Proverbs, at the nexus of chapter 15 and chapter 16. Just a quick revisitation of the value of this book, its purpose, its function, the call that it issues to invite us to appreciate and to seek the wisdom of God, what the benefits are of it, to create in us a sense of need.

If you have ever seen someone that you felt was really on a wrong path, heading down a bad road, maybe a road that we ourselves have traveled at some point in the past, you see the warning signs, you see the cracks and the fissures in the foundation, but someone is bent on a course, on pursuing something, and you want so badly to take what you have in your experience, in your heart, in your love and concern for them, and if you could just get them to see, if you could just for a minute let them walk a mile in your memory moccasins.

This is such a common theme that if you ever saw the old Star Trek series with Kirk and Spock and the rest of it, remember when Leonard Nimoy, as Spock, would need to communicate with somebody and either find out what they knew or impart to them what he knew, and so he would do the Vulcan mind meld. He would stick his fingers in their face and roll his eyes upward, and, "My mind to your mind, my thoughts to your thoughts."

There are times when you think, wouldn't it be great if I could just help someone see what I have seen, know what I know? But you can't. And people who are not interested in what you have to say, they don't have a sense of, "I don't need to know what you want to tell me. I've got it. I'm putting one foot in front of the other. I'm making progress in the direction I want to go. I am enamored of this. I am stimulated by it. I'm in love with it. I know this is going to be the answer to my hopes and dreams. This is going to be fulfilling, satisfying, enjoyable, whatever it may be. It has appeal. I've got the opportunity, and I'm going to go down this road."

It is like watching a child run out into traffic on a busy street. You cringe. Your love for them cries out, and you want to throw your pearls out there to distract them, to stop them, to, "Please, if you would just listen to me, I know what I'm talking about," and you can't. Why is that? Why can we not stop people from what we know is a potentially disastrous path? Why is it? They don't want to know what we have to say. They are not seeking wisdom that we might have to offer.

In many cases, they're not even patient enough to endure us presenting it, much less take it to heart, change their mind, change their path, and say, "You know, I'm not real sure based on my evaluation, but I trust your judgment, and if you tell me this is something I shouldn't do, I love you enough. I respect you enough. I believe you and past counsel that you have given me that was so valuable and so helpful. If you're saying this is something I shouldn't do, your advice is good enough for me because of the source. I know you love me. I know you want the best for me, and out of respect for you, out of an understanding of the proving out of your wisdom in the past, I will change."

How rare is that? Can you think of a time where you were just, your heart was screaming to pull somebody back from the brink? Did you ever hear somebody say, "You know, that doesn't make any sense to me, but I respect you, and I love you enough that I'll follow it because I think you must know what you're talking about"? It is really rare. It requires humility. It requires objectivity. It requires a recognition that maybe I don't know as much as I think I do.

This is our Father in heaven appealing to us. Who is it that is going to listen? The if that is in Proverbs 2: "My son, my daughter, my child, if you will receive my words." Well, why would we receive the words of God? Because we understand who He is. But primarily, when people do heed advice that they may initially not see the wisdom or the practicality of, why do they do it? Out of love.

You want to know whether or not you love God? We tell ourselves we love God. "Oh, I love Him. I love the stories. I love the character expressed. I love the work of Christ on the cross. I love the promise of eternal future," and so on. If we love God, what is the measure of love? If you love someone, you listen to them when they speak and you endeavor to value and try to implement what they say.

Now, in the human realm, they may be speaking out of worry or out of fear or out of uncertainty or out of self-interest or that, you know, we're fallen. But when God speaks, if we love Him, we will listen to Him. And if we do not listen to what Scripture says, if we are not actively recognizing that we have a need, "I need God's Word. I need God's truth. I need God's power. I need the clarity that the Holy Spirit will give me to evaluate a situation, to evaluate options before I make a decision. I need divine wisdom."

God knows the end from the beginning. He knows the causes and conditions and successions and relations, the impinging factors, how it's going to affect others, how it's going to affect me, whether it's going to open up my options or close them down. Things that seem counterintuitive.

I gave you the example a few weeks ago. It really sticks in my mind because I am highly dependent on Google Maps to get where I'm going. And my new truck puts it on the dashboard, which I think is extremely distracting, but that's where it is. And so I'm up in a far-off location, northeast Oklahoma. I'm up around Grove or Afton or somewhere. And I'm in the country. I've gone to this lady's house and I've tuned two pianos there, and I'm ready to come back home.

And I know that she is well northeast of me and my home is southwest. And so I get this little screen on my dashboard that shows me the dot that is myself and my truck. And it says, "Turn north and then go east." And I say, "No, no, no. I live south and west. That can't be right." It is completely counterintuitive. Why would I go north and then turn east? I'm getting further from my destination.

And so I might decide, you know, that just makes no sense at all. I'm going to turn the other direction. Well, come to find out, the fastest and most efficient way to get from that area to this is to get yourself on the turnpike on I-44 that goes between Joplin and Tulsa. Well, to get there from that lady's house, you have got to turn east and then go north because the next gate to get onto the turnpike is miles and miles south, clear down by Vinita. Well, I'm up at Grove. So to get to the Grove gate and get on so that I can make great progress at 85 miles an hour or more, I've got to go north and I've got to go east.

I get to the gate. Now I'm sailing. The only way to find that out is to shrink that screen down to where I can see, oh, this is a short detour north and east, but it will soon be taking me the way I really want to go. But with my limited visibility, it's counterintuitive. It doesn't make sense. And I have to trust Google when it tells me, "Take this road. This is the best and most efficient way."

There are other times where, because it knows about wrecks and traffic stoppages and detours, it will tell me—I've been up and down a road, I just turn it on for out of habit more than anything else—and it will tell me to turn off of the path that I always take. And I think, "Why would I do that? I know the way. I've done this before. I'm going to stay on this road." And I run smack into a three-fire-truck, five-ambulance, multi-car pileup. And now I'm stuck in traffic because I didn't trust that the map knew about that and was diverting me helpfully, not just for my benefit, but for the benefit of emergency vehicles and others who need to get in there or need to get out of there. It's diverting traffic to benefit many people besides just me. But I didn't know that.

Think about the wisdom that is in this book. Think about the wisdom of the Word of God. God knows much more than we do. And when He calls us to do what is difficult, what is counterintuitive, what seems to be the opposite of my simplistic view of love or faith or hope? You think of Abraham taking Isaac up the mountain with firewood for a sacrifice. How counterintuitive is that?

Could you see Abraham saying, "Lord, I know Moses hasn't come yet and there hasn't been a Sinai and tablets of the law, but I know murder is wrong. I've got Scripture. I've got guidance from on high that tells me taking a human life and human sacrifice is an abomination. Why would you call me to do an abomination? I'm not doing it. And I'm standing on principle. I love my son. I would never scare him with a sacrificial knife and tying him to an altar. What's that going to do to him psychologically? What's that going to do to our father-son relationship? Will he ever trust me again when I say, 'Son, let's go do a project'? This is wrong 16 ways to Saturday in the ancient world," right?

How did Abraham know that taking Isaac to the top of the mountain and raising the knife to be stopped by the divine voice and to offer instead the ram in the thicket was going to be one of the most significant parts of the entire Word of God? He didn't know. He didn't know you and I would be reading about it. He didn't know that untold hundreds of millions of believers would learn something about the character of God, learn something about the plan and purpose of God and the Son of God as a substitutionary atonement without that picture.

Was Isaac's life ever in danger in that episode? Not a bit of it. Was the morality of murder or human sacrifice ever in question? No. It is a living parable. It is a picture that has been burned into the eternal pages of the forever.

Why is Abraham a friend of God? Because he loved God and he trusted Him enough to know more than he knew, to have wisdom that, if you invest in it and if you trust God and you do what you do prayerfully, humbly recognizing the limitations of human perspicacity, God will not allow the righteous to be moved.

How did Abraham know to do that? What truth surpassed the idea of no human sacrifice, don't take a life, don't commit genocide of your child, and so on? What did Abraham take to the bank? What truth did he have? What did he aim his faith at? Remember, the merit of faith is in the object. It isn't that Abraham was so faithful that he got it done. The merit of faith is in the object. What was the object of Abraham's faith?

God had told him repeatedly, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." God said that several times. Through Isaac you are going to have descendants that outnumber the stars or the sand on the beach. So Abraham concludes, if I go up the hill with Isaac, I am coming down the hill with Isaac. I don't know how God is going to do it, but the knife is not as real as the promise of God. The sacrifice is not as real as the promise of God. I have no idea what God is up to. I don't know why He is having me do this incredibly difficult thing, but I have His promise.

And He has told me repeatedly and emphatically that Isaac is my heir and all of these descendants are coming through him. Isaac cannot die before he has kids. Isaac cannot die before he has a multitude of descendants. And he is going to have Jacob and Esau at a minimum, right? And through Jacob you have the twelve tribes, and through the twelve tribes you have the multitudes of Israel. It all comes through Isaac. Isaac cannot perish on the sacrificial altar. He cannot die on the hill. God is going to do something. I know not what. It is beyond my human wisdom, but it partakes of divine wisdom. And I will trust that wisdom, as Job said, "Though he slay me, yet I will trust him."

That promise was more real to Abraham than the knife, or the wood, or the altar. And his faith was vindicated and stands as a monument to the solidity of the promises of God. If God makes a promise, that thing is going to happen. You have got to meet the conditions for the promise.

What if Abraham had failed? What if he had said, "No way, I am not going to take my son up there"? Remember, God promised the kingdom of Israel to Saul. "If you will be obedient," He said—you can look it up in 1 Samuel—"if you will be obedient, you will have a dynasty in Israel." Saul failed the condition. That is why he was set aside. And David, a man after God's own heart, was established.

That conditional promise was passed on to David's sons. Many of them failed that test and were removed from the throne, and the kingdom was eventually fumbled away. God promised David a house that would exist eternally, but it turns out many of his sons did not meet the qualification, did not preserve the kingdom, not until David's greater Son comes. But God's promise of an eternal kingdom for the house of David is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The promises of God when the conditions are met.

What rescued the fallen tent of the house of David? Jesus Christ, faithful in all His house. One of His primary titles is Son of David, and He redeems and rescues, if you will, the promise of God. So how important is it for us to know the promises of God and know the conditions under which we can claim them? That is a part of the wisdom that is contained in the book of Proverbs. That's why we're studying it.

There are guarantees. "I have not seen the righteous go hungry. I have not seen his seed begging bread." If we prioritize righteousness, approval from God, you don't have to worry about provision. God will provide. Now, is it going to be provision by human standards? You'll never have an empty cupboard. You'll never lack something in your bank balance. We will have the provision we need to live the life that God calls us to.

You look at Corrie Ten Boom. You read her story, and was she ever daunted? Did she ever doubt the integrity of God? Did she ever abandon her love for God? She endured horrific circumstances. She saw terrible expressions of the evil of human nature and the human sinful condition, but her faith in God never wavered.

And in the same way that you see so many people in Scripture, you see how God has used faithful people down through history to reflect His glory and express His grace. And that's our opportunity. And you could say, "Well, God didn't bless her very much." You watch and see how many stars people like that will have in their crown, and the kingdom of the Son followed by the kingdom of the Father, and the vindication of the promise that the Lord Jesus made that if you have had to give up things in this life, houses or lands or opportunities, you will receive it a hundredfold in the kingdom.

God knows when we suffer a setback or have a— it is an amplified blessing eternally. You have a momentary light affliction that results in an eternal weight of glory. And there's a saying that I always massacre that has something to do with, "Why strive to preserve what you can't keep when you can invest it in that which you can never lose?" And why try to amass anything from material goods to relationship benefits or whatever else in this life, when you can build into eternity that results in a crown that fades not away?

Well, that's what this book is trying in divine love, and God leaning out of heaven, hoping in the same way that we wish there are people who would listen to us and benefit from our experience and our love for them and our desire that they not suffer pain and go through hardship or waste the days and the weeks and the months of their life in endeavors that don't have any eternal benefit. It is a day that is expended and is gone and can never be gotten back.

And unless they turn, unless they see, unless they begin to encounter God and develop a relationship with Him, their life is as meaningless as a withered leaf blowing down the road, soon to dissolve and be no more. It is meaningless if it doesn't count on eternity. The grass withers, the flower fades. It is the Word of our God that abides forever. When we internalize it, our lives, our decisions, our faith, our love, our hope creates something that is eternal. God blesses it. God uses it. And God makes a place for it in the eternal kingdoms to come.

But every day that we waste, every day that we pursue what we think is wise, what we think is good, what we think counts is a day that will never come again. It's take dollar bills, put them in front of the fan, and blow them into the fire. You'll never get them back.

So chapter 2 of Proverbs, and there is a sort of a mini outline here of what this book unfolds. Chapter 1 and this entire nine-chapter introduction: "My son, if you receive my words, if you hide my commandments with you"—remember, he's going to go on to contrast the lady wisdom who stands in the streets crying out, "Receive instruction. Don't waste your life. Don't go down a bad road." And then you have the crafty harlot with her persuasions and her seductions and the appeal that is so deceptive. It seems like a wonderful thing. She promises all kinds of experiences and stimulations, but it ends up being ashes in the mouth. And it is a horrific, cold, gray morning following a night with the crafty harlot, and opportunities are destroyed, potentials are destroyed, and everything that was available by way of opportunity and positive has been taken away, wasted because the crafty harlot beguiled them out of it.

So, "My son, if you receive my words, treasure my commands with you so that you incline your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding." The priority is to listen when God speaks and to believe Him when He makes a promise, not just the positive promises, but the negative promises. God promises judgment to those who intentionally stray, who commit the sin of the high hand. There are promises on the negative side as well. "Vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord." That's a promise. Incline your ear, apply your heart.

Verse 3: "If you cry out for discernment," and we've seen this many times in the past, it begins with just the slightest inclination. If you'll just receive, all you have to do is not move. Here come the words. Just let them come. Receive them. Just don't move out of the way. Don't turn your back. Don't start like the swine to leave and somebody's trying to chuck the pearls in front of you to see if you'll change your mind. Just receive the words, and when you receive them, hang on to them. These are words from God. I think they're valuable.

Did you ever get something really valuable? Did you ever lose something that you were trying to hang on to that was really valuable? Like you get a big check for something and you say, "Wow, what a great thing. Look at this, it's four figures or more." And then all of a sudden, "Well, where did I put it? Well, I laid it down. I thought I would be able to find it, and now I don't know where it is." You tear the house apart. You look at all the trash cans.

You receive it and you say, "Wow, that's valuable." But then you treasure it. "I'm going to put this in a safe place. I'm putting this in my fireproof box. If my house burns down, I've still got this valuable in a safe place." Receive it and treasure it, guard it. Don't let anything happen to it. That's just verse 1.

So that now you're ready for more. That was a wonderful treasure. Is there more from that source? I'm going to incline my ear. I've received some words and treasured them. Let's build on that capital. Let's grow the corpus here. Let's get some more. I'm going to incline my ear. I recognize the value. I'm going to look for more and I'm going to apply my heart to it. Once it comes, what do I do about it?

There were people who listened to the Lord Jesus deliver His teaching, all of that red ink in the Gospels. They heard it. They sat by the seashore when He was in the boat. They sat on the hillside when He was teaching. What did they do with it? Did it make a difference later on? Apply your heart to understanding.

I've been watching a guy who is—I keep using music analogies because I have a job that requires some degree of musicality. So there's someone who is teaching how to play an instrument. Well, I haven't had access to an instrument in recent weeks, so I've been watching the videos and listening to the wisdom, but I haven't had a chance to apply it. And what I have noticed is I understand it when he's talking about it. It makes perfect sense to me. I was doing it in the air, thinking, "Yeah, I could do that." But without applying it and actually practicing it, a couple of days go by and I think, "Now what was it he said again? Was it this finger or that finger? Which hand did what when?"

Without putting it into practice, it begins to recede and to fade. You get instruction in a thing, you've got to start making muscle memory out of it. It has to become a habit. It has to become a procedure that you follow on a regular basis. And pretty soon it becomes natural and you can almost do it without thinking because you've internalized it. You apply your heart to understanding.

Now, when you've reached that stage—and notice how these are progressing—at first, you're just willing to sit still and receive it. You get your defenses out of the way. You're not pushing back and saying, "I don't need that. That's for other. I know somebody who could really use this. I'm going to send them a tape. That'll fix them and their problem. I'm going to write this down and send it to them. I've got a brochure. I've got a tract that summarizes this. Here, take this tract. You need it." Instead of receiving it and setting it aside for myself and treasuring it as valuable for me.

Then we incline our ear for more. We apply our heart to it. We start to put it into practice, turn the corner into habituation and muscle memory. Now we're crying out for discernment. I was inclining my ear and I'm not hearing it. Where is it? Do I need to go somewhere else? Lord, I need some more of this. I'm inclining my ear and this source has run dry. Where can I get some more? I am crying out for discernment and I am lifting up my voice for understanding.

Why would you lift your voice up? God's the source, and if you ask God for bread, He's not going to let you be stuck with a rock or a snake or a scorpion. If you ask, it will be given. If you seek, you will find. If you knock, it will be open. Right? Promises of God.

Does anybody who asks receive? Does anyone who seeks find? Does anyone who knocks find the door opening? There are conditions on that promise, aren't there? Run-of-the-mill guy in traffic somewhere can't just say, "Lord, I want a new car so I don't have to get stuck in this traffic. I want an airplane." There are conditions on ask and seek and knock, right? When the Lord Jesus said, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free," read the context. There are conditions on that promise.

So to cry out for discernment and lift up our voice for understanding, what have we already done? I've already received and treasured. I've already inclined my ear and I've already applied my heart. Now when I cry out, God says, "Here's somebody that will do something with it if I give it to them. I'm not going to give it to no purpose. I'm not going to arrange for more wisdom if they haven't done anything with what I've already provided." What did Jesus say? Another promise: to him who has, more will be given.

You can't start in the middle of this sequence. You have to start at the beginning. That's the condition. Each one builds on the preceding. Cry out for discernment, lift up your voice for understanding. Now at verse 4, "If you seek it like silver"—ever seen these shows about guys that go out and they're prospectors and they're digging around in the Sierra Nevadas and they're trying to find old hoards and abandoned mines? And these guys have given up everything. They sell what they have. They get prospecting equipment and they go out and they live on the land and they dig and they search and they are looking for it. They seek it like silver and they search for it as for hid treasure.

When people find out that there's a missing hoard somewhere, these guys that are divers and go to shipwrecks, they expend all kinds of time and effort because they know there's treasure down there. They search for it as for hid treasure, putting everything else aside. This is my priority. We're going to do this and we're going to find that treasure or die trying.

Then, verse 5, you will understand the fear of the Lord. It's not like, "Lord, I sure wish I understood your plan and purpose," and bam, here it comes. Here's an angel. Here's a prophet. Here's insight into the Word of God. The Holy Spirit's just going to reveal it. There is a process. We build, we grow, we demonstrate our love for God in these acts that reflect motivation and reflect appreciation and reflect an understanding that there is a need. I am insufficient in and of myself. I need what God is offering to me.

You cannot talk to someone. You cannot teach someone. You cannot help someone that has no sense of need. A drunk guy falls off the ocean liner and he's too drunk to know that the ship is leaving and he's got no options. If he doesn't care, you can toss any number of life rings and all he's looking for is the last half of his can of beer. If you don't have a sense of need, you cannot be rescued. You cannot be saved. You cannot come to an understanding of what is real and what is true and what is important when you have no sense of need. "I'm doing fine." Old Kenny Loggins wrote a song, "I'm Alright. Don't nobody worry about me. Leave me alone. I'm alright."

You cannot talk, you cannot teach, you cannot help, you cannot save someone who has no sense of need. You and I, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, positioned and called to represent the Lord Jesus on this earth, we are His body. We are His physical presence on this planet. We are to do what Jesus did. And Jesus sought out the will of His Father: "Not my will, but Thine be done." If it's hard, I'll do it. If it's counterintuitive, I'll do it anyway. Because my faith is that if I start going astray, I am asking and seeking and knocking. I want light on the path. I want to please God in what I say and what I do at whatever cost to myself.

That's what the Lord Jesus did in His incarnate life. That's what we are here to do in our incarnate life. Whatever the personal cost, we have to be dedicated to that. Or guess what? We don't really have a sense of need. We don't recognize our calling.

There's a promise in the Word of God: all things work together for good. Is there a condition on that promise? All things work together for good to those who love God. What is the expression of love? I want to know what He has to say, and I want to follow it. I value it. I treasure it. I'm doing Proverbs 2 on it. And those who are the called according to His purpose. His purpose is not to make me happy. His purpose is to reflect His glory to my benefit and to bless others in and through my presence here in this life. And sometimes being a blessing means doing hard things, things that don't compute to the human mind.

But if you seek her as silver and search for His treasures, four verses of conditions: if, if, if, if. Then comes in verse 5: you will understand the fear of the Lord and you will find the knowledge of God. Because the Lord gives it. In verse 6, He gives wisdom. From His mouth comes knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for everyone. Who does He store up sound wisdom for? The upright. Those who are endeavoring to—we can't live a completely pure life. We can't be sinless. But we can be pure and we can be forgiven and cleansed. That makes us upright.

We can fall and we're momentarily not upright. But by God's grace, through the forgiving and cleansing power of God, we can get back on our feet and now we're upright. And God stores up sound wisdom for the upright. That means we are getting back up on our feet by God's grace. We know how to get up. Might have to start on our knees. Might have to grab a chair. But if we fall, we get back up. We're upright. We're looking for that which is plumb and square. God has wisdom that is sound for us and He will be a shield. He will protect us.

He'll protect us from ourselves. If our judgment is faulty, if we're going down a wrong road, but we are teachable, we are rebukeable, we are instructable, the Word of God, the wisdom that is in the book of Proverbs will draw us up short. It will shine a light on our path and on our feet. "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path," if I'm looking.

Have you ever had a flashlight with a dead battery? I've got one now back there. I've been messing with it and it's got good fresh batteries, but there's something wrong with the connection and the switch. Well, if it doesn't shine, if I can't make it shine, it's useless. What good is a flashlight with batteries and a bulb and everything if it doesn't actually shine? And if I've got a collection of flashlights, but if I don't grab the one that's going to shine on my path, what good is it?

We have the Word of God, but if we don't shine it on our path, lamp to our feet, light to our path, what good is it? What good are we to the Lord? He'll find somebody else who will be faithful. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright. He is a shield to those who walk uprightly.

Notice the uprightly is repeated. There's sound wisdom stored for the upright and to those who are walking uprightly. Even if you stumble, even if you fall, even if you goof, you make a mistake, you get carried away, come back, get your feet back under you, get the flashlight turned back on, and walk uprightly. God will protect us. He is a shield. A shield is a defensive weapon. You won't be deflected. You won't be distracted. You won't be diverted. You won't be neutralized. You won't become a casualty. You will be a beacon of God's light and God's grace for those who are seeking.

He guards the paths of justice. Look at this, verse 8: He guards the paths of justice and preserves the way of His sanctified ones. This is not the Catholic saints. This is those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. You're sanctified. You're clean. And notice, paths of justice. Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity, and every good path. That's in verse 9.

Remember what the promise of the book was back in verse 2: to know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity. Those same themes now are in verse 8 and verse 9: justice, righteousness, equity, every good path.

Nobody wakes up in the morning saying, "You know, I'm going to find a bad path and I'm just going to walk that thing. I don't know where the bad path leads, but it's probably a bad place. And that's where I'm going." Everybody wants a good path, but not everybody recognizes that there's only one way to find it and to walk it. And that's in God's grace and power.

So when wisdom enters your heart, verse 10, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you. Understanding will keep you and deliver you from the way of evil. What's not to like about that? God is pleased. We are blessed. We are thoroughly equipped for every good work. Those in our periphery are blessed because we are faithful, because we trust our Father God in heaven. We're obedient. We're enabled and empowered by His grace, His Spirit, enlightened and guided by His Word. What's not to like about this? And those who mean us harm, those who would deflect and distract, the man who speaks perverse things, we're impervious. God's wisdom is a shield because we are walking uprightly.

Well, this is the benefit of the book of Proverbs, lest we forget as we get down into the latter chapters why we're looking at this book. This is the distillation of the wisdom of God. There is nothing more important in our life than the wisdom of God. Nothing. Name me something more important. You can't be pleasing in God's sight. You can't have the Holy Spirit leading and guiding, blessing efforts, blessing words, activating our spiritual gift, preparing us for service and function now and in the ages to come without this wisdom. You cannot get there without it. It is the most important thing.

That's why I've even got a commentary that says, "Wisdom, the principal thing." Remember that? Get wisdom, and with all you're getting, get understanding. It is the principal thing. It is the heart of God. It is the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the truth. I am the way and I am the life." That's what we're studying here.

So we'll pick back up at the threshold of chapter 16 next time, but we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, we are so grateful to be called by Your name, to be granted the privilege of being Your children through the Lord Jesus Christ, brothers and sisters in a divine family, a royal family, blessed with access to Your wisdom and Your instruction, to be active and fruitful participants in Your plans and purposes. We pray that as we reflect on what we've learned from Your Word, that God the Holy Spirit will bless it to our hearts, illuminate our path, enable us to walk that path and to fulfill our calling to be fit representatives of the Lord Jesus, both now and in the ages to come. We ask it in His name. Amen.