

Obstruction to Wisdom: A Lack of Discipline

Getting focused

As we have examined in earlier studies, wisdom is the proper application of knowledge. However, there are many things that obscure our view of what truth truly is. Because they distort knowledge, these perversions obstruct our ability to apply wisdom in our lives. In fact, many of these prevent us from being able to discern even simple truth. The deceitful nature of certain activities bring about spiritual blindness. However, “the spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inner depths of his heart” (20:27). God’s word is the mirror of our soul. If we will look into it and obey it, we can know the truth and walk in wisdom (James 1:23-27).

The things that obstruct our ability to apply the righteous principles taught in God’s word are impatience, pride, materialism, and intoxication. Each of these grow out of a lack of discipline.

Sobriety today makes for a brighter tomorrow

Read Proverbs 20

“Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise in your latter days” (19:20). Several things are noteworthy in this chapter which, if accepted, will guide us through our formative years.

Verse one introduces us to one of the most deceitful, damaging, obstructors of wisdom—intoxicants. All mind-altering drugs may be included in our assessment, because each lead us astray. Other related characteristics of being “under the influence” that dim our view of the future are:

- Laziness (vs. 4, 13)
- Lying (v. 19)
- Impatience (vs. 21, 22)
- Dishonesty (v. 23)

“The **sluggard** does not plow after the autumn, so he **begs** during the harvest and **has nothing.**”

- Proverbs 20:4

“The exercise of justice is **joy** for the righteous, but is **terror** to the workers of iniquity.”

- Proverbs 21:15

Remorse is all that is left at the end of unwise activity. The allurements of this world, at first, delight our senses, but the result is empty bitterness. It is this emptiness within that leads to further darkness. All the “get rich quick” schemes and preparations for momentary pleasures fail. Impatience breeds foolishness and robs us of life’s richest blessings (v. 21).

If we willingly apply the knowledge received from the Lord, we will receive strength in our youth and glory in our old age (v. 29).

Contentment, moderation, and planning today lead to a prosperous tomorrow

Read Proverbs 21 and 22

Money has its value. However, we must make proper application of our resources to gain any benefit from it. Extravagance leads to poverty. Laziness and selfishness are at the heart of discontent and poverty. Proper planning is the key to happiness and prosperity. The critical lesson in wisdom is to **plan for the future**. “The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty” (v. 5).

Isaiah 55:2 says, “Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?” Many of the material things that appeal to us do not provide any lasting joy or happiness. So, considering what we will do with our resources, we must first establish worth and priority.

First, we must only derive pleasure from things honorable and righteous (v. 15). Pleasure is realized when we fulfill the desires of our heart. Desires are determined by the things that intrigue us. Though we may be inclined to prefer one thing over another, the purpose of heart is determined by knowledge and choice. If we make our plans for the future with the wise counsel of God’s word, satisfaction will be derived from righteous living. “He who follows righteousness and mercy finds life, righteousness and honor” (v. 21).

Secondly, generosity holds the key to wealth. A foolish man squanders his treasure (v. 20). He who has a generous eye will be blessed (22:9). To neglect the needy is to rob oneself (v. 13).

The last step in establishing proper value and worth is humility. Humility enables us to find contentment regardless of our financial situation (Philippians 4:11-13). Humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life (22:4).

Arrogance obstructs the way of righteousness and refuses to allow the Lord to deliver us from evil (vs. 16, 26, 31).

Verses 6 and 13 of chapter 22 provide insight into a fundamental principle in learning. Discipline serves as an instrument of education when properly applied. Discipline is administered incrementally. It begins with instruction and reasoning. If these are not received, more stern measures are applied. The severity of the discipline we receive is commensurate with our response to instruction. Discipline is not a pleasant experience, but the result is the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:5-12). Though discipline can be painful, it will deliver our soul from hell (23:13).

Many things deceive; consider carefully what is before you

Read Proverbs 23

“Buy the truth and sell it not” (v. 23) is an admonition we must always carry with us. When we obtain the truth, we must be careful not to sell it for things of lesser value, and nothing is more valuable than the truth. Several of the things addressed in this chapter are those that deceptively present themselves as having greater value than simple truth.

Our motives, as well as the motives of others, must always be challenged. The worldly seek self-gratification even at the expense of their soul. The allurements of the finer things in life often expose us to be used and abused by others. When we are overly motivated for this world’s possessions, disappointment is certain (vs. 1-9).

Jesus asks, “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26)

It is imperative to recognize the seductive nature of worldliness before you are exposed to it. For parents, this instruction must be clear and forceful. The extremities of discipline are usually not understood by the one to whom it is administered, however, the end result is deliverance of the soul from harm (vs. 10-28).

There are two things briefly addressed that inhibit spiritual growth and rob us of truth: sobriety, or the lack thereof (vs. 20-21), and immorality (vs. 26-28).

Memorize and meditate

“He who follows righteousness and mercy finds life, righteousness and honor.”

- Proverbs 21:21

These are the two critical issues facing young men and women, and they often go together. The first step in avoiding both is not to mix with those who are willing to engage in such activity (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 2 Corinthians 6:14-16).

The addictive, destructive nature of alcohol is vividly described in vs. 29-35. Compare this with the glamorization depicted in the media today. These words from God detail the result of those who give in to the pressure to participate in drinking or taking drugs. The majority of crime, many of the deaths due to traffic accidents, and numerous birth defects in newborns all stem from the use of drugs and alcohol. These destroy ones ability to reason; thus, to participate in these, you have sold the truth and moved the ancient landmark (vs. 10, 23).

Not only are drugs and alcohol responsible for many social ills, but those who do these things forfeit eternal life. The appeal of these at first seem to serve as a means of having a good time, yet the end result is that one becomes enslaved by them (v. 35).

Questions to consider

1. Name three things that are necessary to ensure a financially stable future. _____

2. Drugs and alcohol being so destructive, why do you suppose so many people use them? _____
