

What is more valuable than silver, gold, and diamonds? (8:10-11)

THE TEXT (NASB)

Take my instruction and not silver, and knowledge rather than choicest gold. For wisdom is better than jewels and all desirable things [all delights] cannot compare with her.

Receive my instruction, and not silver and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. Classic KJV - Proverbs 8:10

INTRODUCTION



For true satisfaction, shop carefully and choose well.

Jewels, gold, and silver are precious. But wisdom, understanding, and instruction are worth more. Once you have the basics of food and clothing, put intangible treasures ahead of monetary riches.

Intangible riches? Better, more meaningful benefits.



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COMMENTARY

Buy Skills



There's nothing wrong with silver, gold, and jewels. They're not evil. They're valuable and beautiful possessions. But there are much greater prizes to be had. The problem is, we can't see these treasures, only their results. We can see the rewards of skills, but not the skills themselves.

Suppose we compare the worth of a magnificent, concert grand piano, with the skill of an internationally famous concert pianist. Which is worth more? Certainly the piano is very expensive, but the unseen skills of a concert pianist are even more precious. What's more: A concert piano is never really appreciated until a concert pianist plays it. Likewise, wealth without wisdom is never truly useful. It becomes no more than a more dangerous opportunity for folly and waste.

Put Skills Ahead of Stuff

What we have is less practical and less important than who we are. Instruction, knowledge, and wisdom as invisible skills worth far more than visible securities like stocks, bonds, mutual funds, GICs, real-estate, silver, gold, and jewels. Once we've secured the basic necessities—food, clothing, shelter—getting more of the same is just “the same.” If we focus our efforts on intangible riches—instruction, knowledge, and wisdom—the good things will come as well.

Master Your Money



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The ability to master our money is more valuable than our money itself. If we learn to master our money, regardless of how little or much we have, we always have more than enough. Million-dollar lottery winners almost always end up worse-off, because they lack the wisdom to manage their fortune. Tangible treasures are not evil in themselves, but they become evil, if they distract us from better treasures. Gold and jewels are long-term investments, but knowledge and wisdom are longer-term.

Buy Instruction First, Then Upgrade

There's an almost hidden message in this text, a progression of relative value, a growing in worth. The examples of silver, gold, and jewels moves from the least to the most precious, with jewels most valuable. Silver is often acquired first, then used to buy gold, and the gold is used to buy precious gems. In the same way, there is progression with intangible treasures: Instruction, knowledge, and wisdom. Wisdom is most precious, but it all begins with instruction. If someone is unwilling to follow sound instruction, he can't gain solid knowledge and then certainly not profound wisdom. Someone who values instruction, learning to learn, will treasure knowledge and then love wisdom. Someone who will not listen to simple truths can't grasp the nobler truths. Just as we must store up many silver coins to buy one small pearl, we need to store up the many lessons of life.

Translation



The Hebrew word for jewels, פְּנִינִים (penî•nîm, pronounced “pe-nee-neem”), in Proverbs 8:11, first appears in the Book of Job (28:18), as Job describes the value of wisdom. It's translated as



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pearls (ESV) and rubies (KJV). It's likely not a diamond, since it's also used in Lamentations (4:7) to denote colour and smooth texture. Wisdom is worth more than gold, corals, crystal, onyx, sapphire and any gem. We sometimes use the expression "pearls of wisdom." Pearls were especially rare and precious in the past when deep-sea diving was very dangerous and the oyster beds in distant lands.

Instruction is someone giving us clear, direct "steps." So the text says "my" instruction. This is not just any instruction. All instruction is not equally worthy, and "my" worthy instruction comes from a worthier instructor. Some instruction is a waste of time and money, which we might realize, if we looked honestly at the instructor. Those who refuse biblical instruction, devoting themselves to less important "steps," do gather knowledge, but not wisdom. Refusing the instructions of Proverbs is refusing wisdom.

Classic Comments

In his Bible commentary, Matthew Henry notes:

...instruction must not only be heard but also received. We must bid it welcome, receive the impressions of it, and submit to the command of it; and this rather than choice gold, that is, 1. ...if we have the knowledge and fear of God in our hearts, we are really more happy and better provided for every condition of life than if we had ever so much silver and gold. ...We must receive instruction as the main matter, and then be indifferent whether we receive silver or not.

Wisdom Trumps Wealth

Nothing is more foolish than putting security ahead of wisdom. The voice of security may tell us to cling to our money, from fear of losing it. The voice of wisdom may tell us to take courage and risk our money in an investment. Security may tell us to ignore the needs of others. Wisdom will tell us that caring for other is more secure than any investment. Trade wealth for wisdom. Wisdom is better than wealth.

Some believe wealth is an evil to be despised. That's not what the text teaches. Riches are dangerous only as decoys that distract us from greater treasures. As ageless wisdom says, "A fool and his money are soon parted." So we want to put more effort into erasing foolish habits than simply acquiring wealth, getting smart before getting rich.



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OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus said something similar, but even more startling: He told us to put the pursuit of God's kingdom and righteousness ahead of even our basic necessities like food and clothing (Matthew 6:31-33). Really?

This may seem a formula for starvation... unless there really is someone we can't see, who is watching over what we do, guiding resources to meet our needs, even when we don't make them our primary goal.

Pagans have gold as their God, while saints have God as their gold.

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Get stability and confidence from skills rather than from financial "securities."
- Learn money management skills.
- Get an instructor, coach, pastor, mentor, or someone in this capacity to teach you God's wisdom.

Which of these steps, if any, does Jesus want you to take now? Ask Him.



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KEY WORDS

better life (quality), education, gold, ignorance, instruction, investments, knowledge, real estate, security, silver, training, treasure, wisdom, bf spending

ILLUSTRATION

Who is Prudent Pauline?



Prudent Pauline is a planner. She looks before she leaps, she thinks before she speaks. Her favourite mottos are: “Haste makes waste,” “brains over brawn,” and “don’t jump to conclusions.”

When Pauline first heard that famous maxim: “The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step,” she said NO! It begins with a good map. The map must be studied and the best route plotted. Consider road conditions, terrain, rest stops, refuelling, hostile territory, expected weather, travelling companions, clothing, supplies, and many more factors, including (if necessary) a guide.

She has studied the wisdom of Solomon and even helped teach him a thing or two. Solomon wrote these words about 3,000 years ago in honour of Prudent Pauline. “Whatever your hand finds to do (no matter what you are doing) do it with all your might (give it your full ability and energy) for there is no activity or planning or wisdom after you die—it will be too late.” Pauline says, “First comes wisdom, then comes planning (her favourite activity), and then comes activity.”

Pauline makes the time to do tax planning. She does a work plan every day. She uses a day



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timer or planner to assign priorities to her activities. She and Diligent Daniel are an incredible pair. Pauline does all her homework before she starts an activity.

