

What should you buy first of all? (4:5-9)

Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding! Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth. "Do not forsake her, and she will guard you; love her, and she will watch over you." The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; and with all your acquiring, get understanding. "Prize her, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her. She will place on your head a garland of grace. She will present you with a crown of beauty.

THE TEXT (NASB)

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Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. KJV - Proverbs 4:5

INTRODUCTION



Spend money to get smart; don't stay uneducated. Pay for good training.

Wisdom is not in-born.

A person's IQ may be inherited, but Wisdom is different. It begins in our characters, and our character is the consequence of our choices, our choices in what we do and what we learn. So Wisdom is a matter of choice, not chance.



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COMMENTARY

Translation

The Hebrew verb “to acquire,” קנה (qā•nāh, pronounced “qah-nah”), often means to purchase or get, with financial overtones. *The New Translation of the Holy Scriptures* by the Jewish Publication Society (1985) also translates qā•nāh as “to acquire.” The point is: Wisdom and Understanding don’t just spring up naturally, but they must be obtained from outside ourselves. But where?

It’s Not Free

It will cost us something to get Wisdom. An education costs money. A good, practical education is worth more than the wealth it will bring. Wisdom cannot be stolen from others. It must be obtained through sincere methods. My dad used to say in German, “Lehrgeld muss mann zaehlen.” Roughly translated: “Lessons cost money.” As my business professor Gordon Shaw once said, “Before the age of thirty, it’s not what you earn that counts, it’s what you learn.”

Trade Valuables



Something of value must be sacrificed to obtain Wisdom and Understanding, and that may be money. Most certainly it will be our time and attention. So many other things compete for our attention—the opposition is intense! Wisdom, always seeing the Big Picture, must be our ruling ambition, but we also need Understanding, clearly seeing what’s around us. Every Olympic athlete strives for a gold medal, but celebrates with silver and bronze. They all take effort!

Many Achievable Benefits



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Wisdom and Understanding give us a world of benefits. To all who prize them, to all who pursue them, they give crowns of beauty and garlands of graces. ~~Note how some around us walk with their heads held high, in joy and confidence.~~ Wisdom and Understanding are portable, not easily lost. They're not taxable. Leaders seek advisors who they think have Wisdom and Understanding.

Wisdom does not come by being born into the right family, culture, country, or economic strata. Wisdom requires active pursuit. This is the good news. We can do something about it. It all depends on our desire, drive, and willingness to learn. If we remain foolish, we have only ourselves to blame.

Learn From Others



Since our degree of wisdom and understanding depend on our own actions, we should not be surprised that some are wiser than others. Some seek wisdom; others don't. The first step in the acquisition process is to ask God for wisdom. This takes humility. It implies that we are not the grand repositories of truth in ourselves. We need to learn from others. So wealth without Wisdom can only produce waste.

Off-Course Because of a Car



A friend-of-a-friend once worked very hard after high school, to save up enough money for university. Wisely, she didn't want to go into debt, and she refused to take out a student loan because of the high interest rates. Within the course of a year, she had saved up enough to go to university without needing to work during the school-year, so she could focus completely on her studies.

Then, with all the money she saved, she went sideways, blowing the tuition on impulse, buying



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a car. Seeing the car, she lost sight of the Big Picture. Rather than choosing to go to university when she could, she had to take off another year, with the added expense of the car eating her savings. She lost the Big Picture for a Little Picture. Instead of owning her education, she was owned by her car.

Start with God

To acquire Wisdom, go to Wisdom itself: "If any of you is lacking in Wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given to you," James 1:5 RSV.

It is very heartening to know that God has a plan for each of us (though only believers know it). As we read in Ephesians 2:10: "God has prepared His good works beforehand." This means there are particular opportunities laid out before each of us. But we need to see them.

In the midst of his conversion, the Apostle Paul asked the most important question, "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:10). We are happiest, most fulfilled and personally secure, when we realize our God-given purposes. We should measure our achievements against the potentials and goals that God intends for each of us. When we are most true to our Creator, we end up being most true to ourselves. Whatever the cost in time and treasure, buy the truth.

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through Me," John 14:6. He did not say: "I know about the truth," or "I know the way to the truth," or "I know the truth." He said, "I AM the Truth." This should amaze us.

Clearly, Truth includes Wisdom, Understanding, and Enterprise. How could a mere mortal, even a great teacher, claim to BE Truth? If Jesus never said these words, how could anyone try to promote some new religion by attributing such a paradoxical and arrogant statement to its founder?

APPLICATION



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- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
 - Identify places (e.g. schools, courses, seminars) where you can learn practical life lessons related to your needs and goals.
 - Identify people who will help (mentor, coach, train) you. Ask them for help and be prepared to pay them for it, with or without money.
 - Think about the advice your parents gave you and apply that which you already know to be beneficial.
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Which of these steps, if any, does Jesus want you to take now? Ask him.



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KEY WORDS

better life (quality), economics, education, folly, training, understanding, waste, 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.

