

# Understanding and Finding

*Proverbs 2:5*

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*“Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.” - Proverbs 2:5.*

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It seems as though one of Solomon’s primary concerns, as he writes for us, is that we, in seeing the different issues that we face and deal with during life, are able to be clearly seen and that we can effectively deal with and sort out the issues we face as believers and effective servants of God. He repeatedly tells us that a couple of the foundational things to doing is that we “understand” them and that in dealing with them we find the “knowledge of God” as a result. It is clear that the Bible ties both understanding and wisdom together. “Wisdom” is the more poetic form of the idea and also the more athletic or active of the two as well. Understanding points to the mental embracing of whatever it is in view. Wisdom speaks of the more applicational view of that same idea or issue. Job 28:28 is one of the more famous of the ideas concerning the both of them and speaks clearly of what we are talking about:

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<sup>28</sup> *And to man He said,  
‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom,  
And to depart from evil is understanding.’ ”*

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It is the “fear of the Lord” that makes the issues at hand clear and perceptible; BUT it is the putting of those truths into action, “departing from evil” that demonstrates true understanding of those same truths. Solomon says virtually the same thing in Proverbs 15:33:

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<sup>33</sup> *The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom,  
And before honor is humility.*

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Once again we see the fact that understanding brings action that is based on the wisdom coming from whatever truth is in view. This is the first result of heeding wisdom that enables one to **understand the fear of the LORD** (v. 5). It is interesting that this knowledge is very clearly possible only because the Lord gives it to the **upright** (vv. 6, 7). Thus, while wisdom is to be sought diligently and cultivated in practice, it is not something merited by the actions of an individual. (On wisdom’s foundation in God’s gracious covenant, think through the proverbs ideas of Purpose, Occasion, and Background, all of which lend meaning to just WHY it is we ought to persevere the idea of understanding which, in turn leads to wisdom) Verse 8, btw, states that the purpose of the gifts of understanding and wisdom are to protect the paths of the saints. Proverbs 2:8 (NKJV)

Just by noting the “he” there we can see that it speaks particularly of the “personalized” idea of wisdom/understanding. Of course, it is God, by means of His Word that communicates it to us and thus is to be vehemently pursued by His people.

Just to be sure of this, we note that **2:7, 8** speaks of “**the upright**”. This identifies those who are true believers, who seek to know, love, and obey God and to live righteously. It is plain that, Biblically, these covenant keepers alone that can know wisdom and experience God’s protection.

We probably ought to be sure that we are understanding the phrasing used in the entire verse here. The verb used for “receiving” at the first, refers to the ability to grasp, to discern or to be mentally sensitive to what it means to truly fear the Lord. It is a word elsewhere used to speak as “the fear of the Lord.” The noun itself is what is called an “objective genitive”; and speaks of the fact that the Lord is to be “the object” or the specific aim of fear and reverence.

Notice also the Hebrew word saying that in addition to understanding the “fear of the Lord” Solomon tells us that we will “find” the knowledge of the Lord. The term that is used here is the term *da’at*, or “knowledge”. It goes beyond the normal concept of cognition; as well as that it is often used metonymically (speaking of cause) for obedience (namely for the effect of obedience that follows the thing in view). In this case, as in a number of other Proverbs uses, Solomon is speaking of the result of the “knowledge of God” that comes as a result of obtaining or building the “fear of the Lord”.

We could take a minute to see, the example of Prov. 3:6, where Solomon proclaims “*in all your ways acknowledge him,*” and then uses the name word form to tell us that the RESULT will be that “...*He will direct your path.*” Of course, this surely means that when the disciple follows God’s moral code (His written Word) there will be the sure result of God directing the individual’s path.

The reference to the “knowledge of God.” is another “objective genitive which, in this case tells us that this particular knowledge is that which is “of God” alone. It is not just a kind of knowledge that is applied to God, as nice as that might be considered. It is specific knowledge that, similar to the fear mentioned, that is specifically in a manner or fashion regarding to the true and Living God. Just as a note, it is important that this knowing is not of “A” God, but the sure statement here is that it is the knowledge of “the One and True God.

We might ask the question here about how many there are who think that their knowledge is the equal, if not the superior of the knowledge of any others around. We just note that this passage is clear that it does not merely commend the knowledge that is the result. That knowledge is “found”!!

Just as another observation, we should note that this section is split into two things - grammatically called a conditional sentence. Such a sentence does

exactly what it seems to do, that is, it expresses a condition. Most often, such a sentence is split into two parts called a “protasis” and an apodasis.

The first one, using the two words - “Pro” suggesting that it comes first or before and dasis from the Latin word speaking of that which “comes” and thus is used to speak of that which comes first or in the before part. The second one uses the “apo” which is from the Latin word meaning “after” or in the second or following part. Together they form a statement that creates a two part conditional statement. They are the first part which sets the condition and the second part satisfies that condition.

Actually, we could say that what could be called “the apodasis” or following and filling part is in two parts (vv. 5–8, 9–11), each of which begins with the word translated “then.” Both parts describe the greater insight that comes from Wisdom, but the first emphasizes understanding of God and his ways, while the second focuses on proper and careful behavior in life.

Verse 1-2, 3, and 4 use the word “if” to set conditions for this following section for us to have Solomon set the conditions in which those conditions can be filled. Verse 5 sets what we will call the apodasis for our conditional statement or the second and filling part of it.

The theological discernment of vv. 5–8 is specifically the ability to see God’s care for his people. The fool sees no evidence of this, but the one who is wise understands that God gives success and protection to the pious. An alternative translation of vv. 7–8 is possible (using the “if” of obvious condition, but substituting a form where that fulfillment is a bit more obvious and blatant, but it STILL a part of the condition regardless of the form:

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*“He will treasure up success for the upright. He will be a shield for those who walk in integrity, for the one who keeps the paths of justice. And the way of his pious ones he will guard.”*

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We should talk just a bit about the standards fulfilled for a moment:

- We’ll receive Solomon’s words, who acts in two regards for his reader. He speaks as a father to his children, a form he often and sometimes forcefully speaks in the Book of Proverbs. Likewise, it is easy to see that he speaks as a Prophet of God, speaking for all to hear and heed.

He lays out for us, in the first four verse, what we can interpret at least conditions for a child to realize the results of what Solomon is telling us is necessary here:

1. Receiving the counsel given (v1)
2. Treasuring the commandments laid out for the listener/student (v1)
3. We must incline our “ears” the wisdom given. (v2)
4. We must also apply our hearts to the understanding of what is given (v2)
5. We must cry out for discernment or the insight to evaluate and think honestly and thoroughly understand the reality of the matter. (v3)

6. We must “cry out” for God to enable us to understand. (v3)
7. We must BOTH seek and search for “her” as silver/hidden treasure. (v4)

We want to note a couple things before we progress onward here.

- First, the apprehension of the fear of the Lord is, very obviously, not a thing that is endemic to men. There are certain, must-needed needed steps or actions that need be taken in order to realize and/or apprehend it.
- These steps are not really easy and quickly taken steps but, rather, are those which take real and certain, perhaps lengthy and full of effort.

But it is very clear that these efforts are worth it, to the max. Remember that the goal, found back in verse 1-2 when he speaks of the “The Value of Wisdom”:

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*<sup>1</sup> My son, if you receive my words,  
And treasure my commands within you,*

*<sup>2</sup> So that you incline your ear to wisdom,  
And apply your heart to understanding;*

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Notice the “So that...” there at the beginning of verse 2? It is the receiving and the treasuring that paves the way for what verse 2 talks about, namely, the ability or desire to “incline” the ear to wisdom as well as to make application to our human ability and need to understand the revelation of God.

Verses 3&4 begin with the interesting word: “Yes”.

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*<sup>3</sup> Yes, if you cry out for discernment,  
And lift up your voice for understanding,*

*<sup>4</sup> If you seek her as silver,  
And search for her as for hidden treasures;*

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“Yes” is actually NOT an affirmative (as it is in English) so much as it is a marker of causality. It also underscores the force or the emphasis of what follows, tying it to what went before. It is as if Solomon wants us to hear a raise in his voice or was saying “That’s right! Because IF you cry out...”. The he goes on with the rest of the protasis that he commands for the fulfillment of what was said in the first two verses. That leads us to the apodasis (as we said earlier) or the ending/completion of this conditional statement which sets the stage for what the aim of the statement was.

As we have discussed already, that leads us to verse 5 and the “Then” that Solomon gives to see just what it is Solomon has been leading up to. “If” we do the things he has spoken of, “THEN” verse 5 will follow. The two matters that Solomon gives us are:

- We will understand
- We will find

Both of these have to do with the “fear of the Lord”. We will not go entirely in depth into just what exactly this term means and into the variety of ways in which the Bible uses it; but I do want to see at least a bit of it. Fear of the Lord” is just another way of talking about what the Bible speaks in some places of “Godly fear”. Of course, we know that there is a vast variety of human fears, some very valid and understandable, not to mention justified. Godly fear on the other hand is portrayed in the Bible as belonging only to those who either already are redeemed or are in the process of learning about God and will become regenerated people. It is clear, Biblically, that those who are not believers do not fear the Lord.

Isaiah was quite clear as to just what those who seek to be God’s people OUGHT to have as a root of their minds and hearts:

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*<sup>13</sup> The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow;  
Let Him be your fear,  
And let Him be your dread. (Isaiah 8:13)*

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Note the “Him you SHALL”; the “let Him be”; and, likewise, a second “let Him be...”. We should come to see that this verse (not to mention many, many others throughout the OT) is NOT “You really ought to...”. It is in the form of a command! Likewise, Jeremiah similarly said, over in Jeremiah 32:39–40:

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*<sup>39</sup> then I will give them one heart and one way, **that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them.** <sup>40</sup> And I will make an **everlasting covenant** with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but **I will put My fear in their hearts** so that they will not depart from Me.*

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Jeremiah, the Prophet is speaking of what is done at the time of God’s taking people to be His own. He uses the word “then” to speak of the time of their selection. In Israel’s case, of course, it was speaking of the time that God made covenant with Abraham concerning their selection as His people, not to mention the promise of the New Covenant which made provision for all those purchased in Christ. The Covenant that he says will last “forever” does not speak of the Covenant initially made with Abraham but rather to the promise that all men, including Israel, who embraced Christ, would enjoy full relationship with God.

Just to go a bit further, note that it is the mention of the benefit of this second Covenant (Coming later to be called the “New Covenant”) that would put the “fear of God in them. At the time of Jeremiah’s speaking this, Israel had drifted away from their King any number of times. We think of the great falls in the crossing of the wilderness when fleeing from Egypt. Likewise, there was the numerous and profound dropping away, even into acts of idolatry, that are recorded in the Book of Judges. We could also point to the awful acts of sin that were committed under many of (and BY) many of the Kings of Israel after Saul and David. These, as you know, were punished by the captivities of the

Northern AND the Southern Kingdoms in punishment. The Northern Kingdom went away to the Assyrians and the Southern Kingdom was taken by the Babylonians. Just to underscore our point, all of those chastening's mentioned served, to some degree, to teach and emphasize the needfulness of the fear of the Lord.

Solomon, in this passage (and others) teaches the need and value of the fear of the Lord to God's children. God MUST be the object of our "fear" not any other human or imagined object. He also makes it, here, abundantly clear that this needful fear is chiefly taught via the Word of God, the Bible. The great Prophet Moses, at the end of the Pentateuch told Israel (and all to follow), in Deuteronomy 13:4:

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*<sup>4</sup> You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.*

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The language there is not merely an exhortation, but is an imperative. It is a COMMAND. It was something that Israel was command to do in order to reap the blessing and good fellowship of God. David, the great King of Israel said much the same thing, telling his readers:

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*<sup>11</sup> Serve the LORD with fear,  
And rejoice with trembling. (Psalm 2:11)*

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If David's citizens/fellow servants of God were to reap God's benefit and blessing the "fear of the Lord" and even trembling/worship MUST be done in the light of just Whom they were facing@!

We can think of that verse in Psalms and take just a touch more light from it in order to close our little study today. The fear of the Lord, even such as spoken of by Solomon in our verse in view, must not be done in a mechanical or artificial fashion. We are standing in the presence of the Lord of the Universe! So many people today, though I suspect that they DO indeed genuinely know the Lord God as their God and Redeemer, do NOT come before Him, in either official worship or the personal worship in which we all, at least OUGHT to partake. There is no rejoicing or trembling in our approach! I think many of think that such action is silly or not necessary. What it really does is act to demonstrate a failure to really understand just Whom it is that we face. So many worship as if it the payment of a credit card debt. This is, in my view, very, very sad!

So, just to restate our understanding and interpretation in this passage...The word "then" refers us back to the conditions under which this understanding and knowledge are to be acquired. They may be summed up as humble, earnest, patient, persevering, diligent search after wisdom. Then "the fear of the Lord" and "the knowledge of God" will be apprehended.

As always, there are a number of Biblical illustrations that we can appeal to in order to give light to our point:

- To the descendants of Seth, the holy seed, seeking to know God, a clearer revelation (it would seem) was made of Him. He was revealed to them by that Name (Jehovah) which is His covenant, Name with man (Gen. 4:26).
- Also, to Abraham, obeying His Word and following Him in childlike faith, many were the revelations made of God, and even a distant view was given him of the mystery of the Incarnate Son (John 8:56).
- Likewise, to Jacob, wrestling in prayer, though the incommunicable Name was withheld from him (Gen. 32:29; Rev. 19:12), there were fresh revelations made, or he never could have said “I have seen God face to face” (Gen. 32:30).
- Of course, we can appeal to Moses, pleading earnestly for a view of the divine glory, additional revelations were vouchsafed of the attributes, not only of God, but of God in Christ (Exod. 33:18; 34:5).
- Furthermore, was it not to the Apostles leaving all to follow Jesus, to the Bereans and Ethiopian searching diligently the Scriptures,
- Lastly, we look to Cornelius seeking with prayer and alms to learn God’s mind, that discoveries were granted of the Triune God, as now revealed?

Just by way of application we can note to that to finite minds the revelation of an infinite Being must needs be limited. We can never know all, but only as much as we can receive, and as God is pleased to reveal about Himself. But it is a duty, as well as a privilege, to know all we can. What He makes known, however, is not to gratify curiosity, but to educate our souls for heaven.

Nor is it theoretical only but practical knowledge of Him we need. Right notions of His nature and character are essential to our religion, our worship, our salvation. Without them we might go far astray, as the heathen have done, and deify human vices.

We are indebted to dogmatic truth, as handed down through the ages, and enshrined in the goodly portions of the Protestant Creeds, for correct conceptions of the Deity so far as He has thus far made Himself known to mankind. The dogma of the Trinity in Unity, though ever inexplicable, is ever to be received and cherished with devout faith and awe.

But let me not forget that to know *about* God is not to know God. To be an orthodox Trinitarian is not necessarily to be a true Christian. The embracement of given facts is not the all total of what is needed to embrace the Lord. Experiential knowledge of God as my Father, of the Son as my Savior, of the Holy Ghost as my Sanctifier,—this I must aim to have. And this I shall have in proportion as I, as Hosea said: “*follow on to know the Lord*” (Hos. 6:3).