

Wisdom's Total Compensation

Proverbs 2:1-22

During my years of working in Human Resources both in payroll and in recruiting/hiring, one of the questions that always came up during the interview process either with the employee candidate or the recruiter had to do with what we call Total Compensation. They didn't want to know just the salary; they wanted to know all the benefits that were available. Salary, as you know, is just one component of an employee's compensation.

Total compensation has been defined as the sum total of all benefits, monetary and otherwise, an employee receives from a company. The packages are designed to attract and retain talent. Depending on the size of the company, a compensation package may have several components. Total compensation packages are as unique as the companies themselves and include many of the following components.

- Bonuses
- Overtime pay
- Shift differential
- Vacation and vacation accrual
- Sick time
- Personal Time off – PTO
- Holidays schedule
- Medical, Dental and Vision
- EAP – Employee Assistance Program
- 401k or other retirement options
- Company Match on 401k up to a certain percentage
- Stock options
- Fitness memberships
- Education assistance
- Vehicle or mileage compensation
- Phone/computer
- Housing
- Childcare
- Relocation expenses
- Short and long term benefits
- Signing bonus
- Retention bonus
- Workers compensation/disability pay

Some companies consider a number of factors when offering new employees a position such as:

- Level of Education
- Work experience
- Skill
- Roles/responsibilities
- Industry
- Location

Economic conditions and availability of workers with certain skills affect compensation. Every year we were involved in a survey that compiled the compensation package we offered our employees with the compensation package of like industry or like positions. The results were then sent back so that we could measure how we stacked up with the compensation packages of the other companies that participated in the survey. We could then determine if our pay grade was comparable to that of the other companies in the area. For example, we would look at engineers or assembly line workers or machine operators and compare their compensation with the same positions of other companies.

Even in today's tough economy companies are doing what they can to manage the bottom line in an effort to turn a profit but still be competitive with compensation to retain employees.

Proverbs 2 provides us with a look at the Compensation of those who will follow wisdom. Chapter 1 revealed the purpose of Proverbs. If we follow the path of wisdom it will guide us in making sound judgments that lead to godly living. By following the guidance offered we not only make wise choices, more importantly we learn how to live godly lives in everyday life situations.

We also saw that the first step in the pursuit of godly living begins with fearing the Lord, having a reverent attitude about God that instills motivation to live godly in everyday life. The theme of Proverbs is **“the fear of the Lord.”** This pursuit leads to life. Ignoring wisdom's path leads to death.

Chapter 1 also showed us the value of obeying our parents and revealed the danger if we follow the

wrong crowd. Their intention is to lead us astray. The chapter closed with an exhortation to follow wisdom with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Our study in chapter 2 reveals the benefits of following wisdom. So with that please open your Bibles to Proverbs 2. We'll be looking at the entire chapter this morning. If you don't have a Bible share with someone sitting next to you or you'll find one on the music rack in the back.

Someone has said that the "benefits of seeking after wisdom are found only if we seek with the proper disposition."

Chapter 1 has already given us a hint, but the question again needs to be asked. **Why should I pursue wisdom? What's in it for me?** After all, it's a lifetime endeavor that takes a lot of hard work and commitment. We need to consider that if we pursue wisdom diligence is required.

I. DILIGENCE IS REQUIRED

First of all we see that there must be a willingness to follow wisdom.

A. There Must Be Willingness For It – v. 1

Look carefully at the action steps the father indicates are necessary to find wisdom. The son must accept and apply his teaching. You have to want to obey his guidance and it must be done willingly. So here's a word to those of us who are in a position to teach and demonstrate that wisdom is worth pursuing. We cannot coerce or pressure them to follow us. We cannot force them to follow. They must obey willingly.

The son needs to be open to what the father is teaching. That it's the right way to go. He must believe that the father has his best interest at heart. The father on the other hand, is hoping that the son sees the value, the benefits of following his advice because it will lead him in the right direction.

When I was learning to drive, at 13, I needed to listen carefully to the instructions given to me by my Dad.

Warren Wiersbe writes "the only way to end up at the right destination is to choose the right path."

Our passage also says that the son needs to store up those commands. It's the same word used in **Psalm 119:9-11** when the psalmist says "**Wherewithall shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed (obeying) thereto according to Thy word. With my whole heart have I sought Thee; oh, let me not wander from Thy commandments. Thy word have I hid (treasured/stored up) in my heart that I might not sin against Thee.**"

How can you know if the way someone wants you to go is the right way, how can you know if what someone wants you to do is right or wrong? We need to store up God's Word in our heart. Now to hide or treasure something isn't to bury it so no one can find it. It's to store up with the intent of using it at just the right time. **Robyn stores up jars of canned goods from the garden to use when she cooks through the winter. They aren't just stored up and left on the shelf so there are lots of colorful jars. They are stored up to use when she needs them.** That's why Scripture memory is so important. Have God's Word stored up so that at the time you are faced with a choice about doing something you can reference the Scripture stored up to help keep you on the right path. I can't encourage you enough to memorize Scripture. That's why we put a new verse in each month for you to learn. It can keep you from taking a wrong and potentially dangerous path in life. There must be a willingness on your part first to listen and then to apply it.

II Timothy 2:15 "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the Word of Truth."

Paul goes on to say at the end of chapter 3 that God's Word equips us to do good works. **(v. 16-17)**

Peter will encourage us to crave spiritual milk of the Word to help us grow up in the faith. As I tell the kids – to Stand Rock Solid. **(I Peter 2:2)**

If we are grounded in the faith through a diligent search of Scripture we won't be tossed around from one belief to another or led astray by the kinds of people Solomon is warning his son about. We'll be wishy washy in our theology if we don't seek wisdom that comes through God's Word. We must willingly obey. **(Ephesians 4:14)**

James 1:22 tells us we should **“be doers of the Word and not hearers only”** otherwise we only deceive ourselves. It's my prayer that each week you come to hear God's Word that you leave with something that challenges you to change in some way into Christ likeness. Putting something into practice requires a willingness to do it. Starting in March I am going to take the teen guys over to the House for a Sunday school class. But I want to tell you right now it's going to take some effort. All of us must be willing to want to hear and then want to do. Diligence requires willingness.

B. There Must Be Engagement In It – v. 2-3

Diligence also requires us to be engaged. If we are to follow after wisdom we must engage the ear. We must put ourselves in places and times where we hear the Word of God preached and taught. If you've ever heard Dr. Charles Stanley he uses one word repeatedly in all his messages. If I had a nickel for every time he said it I'd be a rich man. **What is that one word? “LISTEN!”** He wants you to pay attention to what he's about to say. The same with Solomon's advice to his son and to us – pay attention, this is important, it will save you from heart ache and headaches along the path of life

I can't ever hope to do well in a class if I day dream during the lecture or if I skip class. **When I took Greek in college you never wanted to miss a class**

because when you did it was difficult to catch up even from missing just one class.

I can't expect to do well in the Christian life if I don't listen. When we miss church or miss reading God's Word in the day, we miss the opportunities of hearing what God has to say to us. **Last week we were getting ready to head out the door. Now Robyn generally takes David to school because I have a longer commute. On Thursday she had to travel up to Bay City to one of the facilities for the day. Now I knew she had to go there, but somewhere in the course of our conversation earlier in the week I missed hearing her say that I would need to take David to school.**

If we don't meet regularly with God we miss out on what He has to say that will help us become wise. **I have counseled with people in my years of ministry where work responsibilities require them to be gone on Sundays. Sometimes I'll get an email that says they're struggling in their walk with Christ. They go on to say they aren't reading their Bible like they should and they're not going to church. I say to them that it sounds like you already know what needs to be done. Apply what you know you should be doing. I tell them to find a church nearby through the Yellow Pages or if they have their computer to go to some of the websites of solid Bible teachers and listen to a sermon. Diligence is required and that involves engaging the ear regularly and then applying what you hear.**

The verse also states that we are to engage the heart as well as the ear. When we listen with a heart of understanding that engages the mind to act in obedience. The heart ponders the Scripture and through our meditation on it we come to understand actions that need to be taken.

Psalm 1:2 But his delight is in the Law of the Lord; and in His Law he meditates day and night.” The result of not meditating is following the wrong crowd found in verse 1.

There are quite a few verses that speak about our need to meditate on God's Word and the benefits of doing so. Take time this week if you have a concordance in the back of your Bible or go to studylight.org and do a word search on meditate and you will see it laced throughout Scripture. We must engage the mind and the heart if we will pursue wisdom and follow her path.

One more thing that I see in verse 3 that we are to engage - our mouth. I like to think of it as praying. **“Cry out for insight, call out for understanding.”** I return to the verse we considered briefly last week only to remind of what **James 1:5** says that **“if any man lacks wisdom he should ask of God.”** **“If you don't know what you're doing, pray to the Father. He loves to help. You'll get his help, and won't be condescended to when you ask for it.”** (Message)

Pray for it. Call out to God to give you wisdom. He will lead you along the right path of godly living. He doesn't want you to wander around in life hoping somehow you will get it. He has given us a guidelines to pursue godly living that please Him. **Proverbs 3:5-6** commands us that when we trust the Lord he will make our paths straight. He will show us the way to go. He will give us the wisdom to do what's right.

There is one more requirement noted in verse 4 in order to be diligent in our pursuit of wisdom. There must be a high estimation of it.

C. There Must Be A High Estimation Of It – v. 4

We need to value it as we would a buried treasure. We need to consider that it is more valuable than precious metals. With diligence we need to search for it as we would in mining for silver.

[In Bible times silver extraction involved mining the ore in underground galleries. Long washing tables have been found along with cisterns that collected](#)

[rain water used in washing the ore. Then it would go through the smelting process in which various other ores were separated from it. When you the refiner could see his face in the reflection of the silver it was ready. It took a lot of time and patience. Consider that the process God uses to refine us is His method of helping us reflect His image to others around us.](#)

Consider the extraction of wisdom, if you will, to be a laborious process that requires effort, diligence, and even patience. We must consider wisdom a valuable commodity that is worth pursuing.

Diligence is required to follow wisdom where there is a willingness to engage in pursuing it because we hold it to be more valuable than anything else we might spend our time pursuing.

Colossians 2:3 “In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

What are you pursuing today? What is your heart set on? Is there eternal value to it? Are you seeking her with diligence.

One author posed this very thought provoking question. “If you worked as hard for your employer as you do seeking for God's wisdom would you still have a job? Let me add another question. If you worked as hard at school as you do seeking for God's wisdom would you pass the class, would you graduate from school?”

[When I was preparing to run the Detroit Marathon, I would be on a long run of 20 miles. There's not much to do when you're running through a park or along a street except to think. I'd be out for about 4 hours. Sometimes I would ask myself if I had as much commitment to studying for a Sunday school lesson or in my own spiritual walk as I do in training for this race.](#)

Godly wisdom requires diligence! We need to go all out. **But then you might ask yourself, is it worth**

the effort? This is where we begin to see the benefit of wisdom. Notice that deliverance is reported.

II. DELIVERANCE IS REPORTED – v. 5-19

A. There Is Deliverance Through Worshipping God – v. 5-11

Solomon is now going to reveal some of the benefits of wisdom, benefits of fearing and knowing God. When we worship God as we should then there is deliverance. When we search for wisdom we will find God and we will fear God.

As we have discovered the kind of wisdom we are talking about that will guide and guard our steps, is a quality that can only come from one source. We find that in **vs. 6 – “For the Lord gives wisdom”** He possesses it and it is His to give and as we discovered in **James 1:5** it is freely given to those who ask in faith from hearts that pursue it without doubting. **Why do we not get wisdom when we ask?** It is because we doubt God.

The verse continues by saying that for those who store up or treasure wisdom, there is victory. Wisdom becomes a shield that is used when the temptations of the world, when the wicked knock at our door and invite us to join them in pursuit of some venture that will involve deceit, or robbery, or murder and all the things they pursue. Wisdom becomes a weapon to guard against such wicked ways. **Verse 8** states that the Lord will guard the steps of the upright, the person who endeavors to live a godly life. Now that does not mean that we will never be the target of the wicked. It does mean that if we diligently pursue after wisdom and apply what we learn, He will guard us from going down the path that the wicked want us to go. He will help us understand righteousness to avoid wickedness.

Ps 119:34 “Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law and keep it with all my heart.”

Proverbs 4:4 – “Then he taught me and said to me, ‘Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments and live.’”

Proverbs 4:20-21 “My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your sight; keep them in the midst of your heart.”

Proverbs 4:23 “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

The Message says to keep “vigilant watch” over our heart. Guard it. When we are pursuing wisdom it will guard our days and our ways so that we will follow godly principles and live godly lives.

Notice as well that when we diligently follow wisdom there is deliverance from the wicked man.

B. There Is Deliverance From the Wicked Man – v. 12-15

We see both that his words and his ways are perverse. It suggests someone that has turned away from the right path to follow a dark path. His actions are wicked. There is nothing that should attract us to follow him, because his ways are crooked. Contrast that with the ways of the Lord in **Proverbs 3:6** who leads us down straight paths, paths of righteousness, paths of right living. The wicked man’s ways are wrong, they are wicked, and corrupt. His language is corrupt and vile, often laced with expletives. He is bent on being disobedient and looking for ways to cheat the system to his advantage. Oh, he’ll woo us with enticing offers as we saw last week, offers to have our house filled with the latest and greatest even if they come at the expense of hurting someone in the process. But we saw last week that his ways only end in destruction. His corruptness will catch up with him eventually.

So watch out. If you are pursuing wisdom, it will help you discern that his ways are wicked and his

end is destruction. It will help you say no to his appeals to join him.

There is yet another benefit of wisdom in this passage, something else wisdom will deliver us from.

C. There Is Deliverance From the Wicked Wife – v. 16-19

Like the wicked man, the wicked wife is out to entice you but not with perverse words. She entices with flattery. *An unknown author wrote “never let a fool kiss you and never let a kiss fool you.”* Flattery is defined as excessive, untrue, or insincere praise; an exaggerated compliment or attention; to make someone seem better or more attractive by praise and attention. But let me add that this doesn't necessarily have to be a woman enticing us to engage in immorality. Work or hobbies or sports or some other thing could be the mistress that entices us and lure us away from godliness, from the wise path.

Her words drip like honey, but with an aftertaste that is sour. They're always dressed to the nines in an effort to lure you away. Her seduction is subtle. She uses flattery to woo you to her side and into her bedroom. It may look and sound sweet but it will end in destruction. *When I was in High school my brothers and I helped a local farmer in the spring gather Maple sap to make syrup. We would get thirsty out in the woods and if there was still some snow we would make a snow ball and then dip it in the sap. It was quite sweet to the taste but after a while it left a rather bitter taste in the mouth.*

This woman has ignored both her vows before God and with her husband. She is out to entice you into committing an act of adultery. A diligent pursuit of wisdom will keep you from her beguiling charm.

In the closing verses we notice another benefit for pursuing wisdom. It also reveals what will happen if we don't choose to take the path of wisdom.

III. DELIGHT OR DOOM IS THE REWARD – v. 20-22

If you follow the ways of wisdom there is a reward. It's a benefit for staying the course, for keeping to the path. It's a path that must be walked.

A. The Path That Must Be Walked – v. 20

Often when we read in Scripture about someone's walk it is referring to their conduct, how they live. Solomon is appealing to his son to stay on the path of right living, to conduct his way according to the commands of God. You can't go wrong when you keep His standard, when you obey His commandments. The Lord says in **John 14:21** that if you keep or obey His commandments, it demonstrates that you love Him.

Psalm 23:3 reminds us that if we follow the Shepherd He will both restore or refresh our soul when circumstances would otherwise drain us of strength to keep going. The Shepherd will guide us on paths of righteousness for His name's sake. He has a reputation to consider, so when we as His sheep prosper under His care, He is honored. The passage ends by stating that when we follow the Shepherd, goodness and mercy will follow all our life and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Now there's a benefit. We won't have to pay rent or utilities. The Lord has gone to prepare that place for us and He's promised to come back to get us so we can be there forever. **(John 14:6)** Everyone say forever. That's a long time. You'll never be evicted. He'll never change His mind about you. Take the advice of Solomon stay on the path of right living. Be diligent to stay on the path. But you know what? Here's something to tuck up in that gray matter we call the brain. We don't have to try and live a godly life on our own. If you have trusted Christ as your Savior He has given you the

Holy Spirit. When we surrender to Him, when we say okay I'm letting you do your work in me to make me more like Christ, when we yield to Him, He'll start working on us and in us so that our character changes to be like Christ.

Every time I shop at Home Depot I'm reminded of the online survey I can take for a chance to win a \$5,000 shopping spree. I've done it a couple of times but have yet to win. But let's say one day I fill it out and the next day a team of experts show up on our door step and tell us we've won a complete house makeover. They'll come in a completely redo everything. How many of you would turn them away because you want the joy of doing it? I'd let them in in a heartbeat. Me vs. the experts? If it's free, have at it.

The Holy Spirit is the expert when it comes to building godly character in us, so move over and let Him do the work. All we have to do is follow Him.

who have accepted Him as Savior. He will take us to live in the land He has prepared for us. It is a place as Solomon suggests that we will remain in. After quite a few years of being in captivity, God, working in the heart of King Darius of Persia, allowed those who wanted to return to Jerusalem that opportunity in order to rebuild the Temple. A lot of work went into the project at the oversight of Ezra. He reminded the people who were returning of God's promise. **"The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to Him, but His great anger is against all who forsake Him."** (Ezra 8:22)

Do you know the Lord today? Are you pursuing His wisdom, His path by following the commands He has given in His Word? If so, you will remain in the land He promised to you.

We see one final thought in this passage. It's a warning. We see the path that must be walked and the promises that will be kept. In **verse 22** we see the purging of the land for those who choose not to follow after wisdom, those who reject God.

B. The Purging Of The Wicked – v. 22

That they will be torn from the land suggests a violent end for them. God will rip them away for their wickedness. The end, Scripture reminds us, is a place of eternal and perpetual torment. **You know that I have been suffering from leg pain for these past 7 weeks. At times it is beyond my ability to tolerate. It's excruciating, unbearable and all I can do is writhe in pain and cry out in agony. One night I told Robyn that if this is just a glimpse of the pain and torment that awaits those who walked their own path in disobedience to God, how terrible that will be**

How about you today? What path are you taking?

Solomon's advice would be to continue following the path of pursuing wisdom that leads to godly character. He would also advise those who have not yet chosen to walk that path or those who have strayed from God's path to turn in faith and follow Him. Give your life to Christ and let His Spirit guide you. The right path is not an easy path. It will take effort, you must be diligent and vigilant, but the benefits are, as they say, out of this world.

Will you choose to follow Him? Only you can decide.

C. As we prepare for The Promises That Will Be Kept – v. 21

When Israel was delivered from Egypt God gave them some simple commandments to remember. There were 10 of them. He had some conditions. If you keep my commandments you'll live in the land I'm giving you throughout your generations. But if you ignore them and choose to follow your own path then I'm going to run you out of town. Read the books of History and the prophets and you see that God periodically reminded them of these conditions. In spite of these warnings they frequently disobeyed. In 722BC God allowed the Assyrians to come in and take the 10 northern tribes into captivity. Then in 586BC God allowed the Babylonians to come in and conquer Judah.

God is faithful to keep His promise. He will reward for obedience. He will give retribution for disobedience. What He has said has or will come true. **I Thessalonians 4:16-17** tells us that Jesus is coming again for those who have followed Him, communion turn in your hymnal to #656 – **Take Time To Be Holy.**