

THE HOLY GRAIL
PROVERBS 2:1-22

By Pastor John Carlini, D.Mn

M.I. GOD'S DESIRE IS THAT WE LIVE FULL, ABUNDANT LIVES. HE HAS FILLED US WITH HIS HOLY SPIRIT. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT COMFORTS US, GUIDES US, AND LEADS US INTO ALL TRUTH.

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In chapter one, the poet warns us not to let the world guide us in our search for love, meaning, and security. He said if we ignored God's wisdom, then we would be headed for disaster.

In this morning's passage, the poet will take the positive route. We are reminded that as Christians, we have received the Holy Spirit and Jesus said the Holy Spirit would guide us, lead us, and comfort us. We can avoid all sorts of confusion in life if we just surrender to the Holy Spirit and follow God's leading.

Let me tell you why we often get confused. We get confused because we often lose sight of the fact that God, The Holy Spirit lives in us and He speaks to us but we often find ourselves pursuing worldly pleasures.

An example is, in seminary, I had some strange and fun loving friends. One of them lived in a funeral home. In exchange for free rent, he had to be the night watchman. He was known to all his dates as a real romantic, because he always brought flowers on his dates. Little did they know where the flowers came from. At any rate, we had been partying one night and my friend had a little too much to drink. When I saw him the next day, I asked him how he was feeling. He said, "You wouldn't believe what happened to me last night. I'm never drinking again." "What happened?" I inquired. "Last night when I got home, I passed out and fell into one of the coffins. When I came to, I was so confused." "Why were you confused?" I said, "Weren't you just plain freaked out?" He said, "No, when I realized I was lying in a coffin I thought, 'If I'm alive, why am I in this coffin? But if I'm dead, then why do I have to go to the bathroom so bad?'"

In today's passage, we learn how not to be confused in life. In fact, the poet is going to give us some real encouraging news if we are willing to follow God's lead. The main idea of this morning's passage is: **GOD'S DESIRE IS THAT WE LIVE FULL, ABUNDANT LIVES. HE HAS FILLED US WITH HIS HOLY SPIRIT. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT COMFORTS US, GUIDES US, AND LEADS US INTO ALL TRUTH.**

There has been a lot of talk lately about the book The Da Vinci Code that has sparked new interest in the Holy Grail. The Holy Grail was the alleged cup with which Jesus celebrated the Last Supper. If the Holy Grail was the vessel that contained the blood of Jesus, then in reality each one of us who has received Jesus as Lord and Savior are Holy Grail, because when we received Jesus, God the Holy Spirit came into our hearts and there He resides. We are common vessels who have been made holy so that we can be containers in which God lives.

In order to understand the breakdown of this morning's passage, let me draw your attention to the fact that there are 22 verses. Actually there are 22 stanzas in this chapter of Proverbs. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Verses 1, 5, and 9 begin with the letter "A." Verses 12, 16, and 20 begin with the letter "L" the middle letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Jesus said that He was the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. The author is saying that if we immerse ourselves in God's wisdom, we will know everything we need to know from A to Z.

I. GOD'S SPIRIT LEADS US INTO ALL TRUTH (Vs. 1-11)

IF WE ARE HUMBLE AND SINCERE, GOD WILL REVEAL HIMSELF TO US.

Verses 1-11 remind us that God's Spirit leads us to all truth, but it is important to note that this is conditional. **IF WE ARE HUMBLE AND SINCERE, GOD WILL REVEAL HIMSELF TO US.** Look at the way this section is set up. The NLT misses this construction. But the NIV

and NASB catch it. If you scan verses 1-4, you will see the word "if" stand out. "If you accept my words ... if you call out for insight ... if you look for it."

Then in verses 5 and 9 you will see sentences start out with the word "then..." "Then you will understand." So the poet is telling us that there are conditions under which we can gain wisdom.

A. OUR ATTITUDE (Vs. 1-4)

Verses 1-4 describe those conditions in terms of our attitude.

1. BE RECEPTIVE (Vs. 1-2)

In verses 1-2, we are instructed to be receptive. God the Holy Spirit continually speaks to us. However, we must actively listen. It takes a submission of our will to hear.

Again, the teacher or the parent appeals to the child by using this intimate appeal, "My child." We can only accept God's word if we intentionally seek it out. The teacher says, "Turn your ear to wisdom." We must actively listen for God's voice and we do this by reading the Bible, listening attentively to sermons, interacting with Bible studies, and quieting ourselves in prayer before God.

Look at the second half of verse 1. The word store-up means to guard, to put away for safekeeping. Memorizing Scripture is a great habit to get into. Look at how verses 1-2 go together. The first line of verse 1 parallels the first line of verse 2 and the second line of verse 1 parallels the second line of verse 2. We can only accept God's words if we are willing to turn our ears to wisdom. We can only store up God's commands in us by intentionally applying our hearts to understanding them. So we have to be receptive and we have to be willing to listen for God's word. That is meditation.

2. BE VULNERABLE (V. 3)

Secondly, as verse 3 points out, we must allow ourselves to be vulnerable. We must be willing to acknowledge the truth, and that we are foolish. I have seen too many Christians who think they know it all. They will say things like, "I believe this or I don't believe that." Yet, when you ask them to demonstrate their beliefs from Scripture, they cannot do it. We must be willing to acknowledge that we are in need of God's wisdom. We need to ask God, The Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth. That is the picture of calling out, and crying out for insight and understanding. Too many of us want to pretend we know the answers and that we know a lot about God. I know I frustrate a lot of you people when you ask me a question and I respond, "I don't know." Now to be sure, I could make up a pretty good answer, but I would rather not. There is a lot I do not know and I too need to call out for wisdom and cry aloud for understanding. We are all fellow travelers on this spiritual journey through life.

3. BE DILIGENT (V. 4)

We must be receptive and we must be vulnerable. Verse 4 commands us to be diligent. Look at the picture here: It is someone looking for silver and searching for hidden treasure. If we thought there was treasure buried somewhere in our house or on our property, we would dig up every inch of lawn and tear apart every wall in every room looking for it. If we found one piece of gold an inch deep, I guarantee we would not stop digging there. We would dig down six or seven feet looking for more gold.

Learning God's wisdom takes diligence. I think too many times we think things should come easily and if they do not we are ready to give up and quit. But if we were honest, we would have to admit that nothing in life that is valuable or worthwhile comes easily. If you want to be a great student, you have to study hard. If you want to be a great athlete, you have to practice. The interesting thing is, we may study our brains off and never be a great student, and we may practice

our socks off, yet never become a great athlete. However, if we are receptive, vulnerable, and diligent in our pursuit of holiness, we will hit pay dirt. We will find treasures beyond our wildest imagination.

B. GOD'S ATTITUDE (Vs. 5-11)

Look at verses 5-11 where God's attitude is described. Even though this is two sections, verses 5-8 and 9-11 are parallel so I will describe them together.

1. HE REVEALS HIMSELF (Vs. 5 & 9)

In verse 5 and verse 9, we can see that God reveals Himself to those who seek Him. If we come to God with humility, open to His leading, and if we are vulnerable, expressing our need for Him, and if we continue to pursue holiness without giving up, God will personally reveal Himself to us. We will understand what is right, just and fair, because we will come to know God. As we know God in all His holiness and grandeur, we will have a proper fear and reverence for Him. This will keep us on the right path. Please keep this in mind it is not that we want to know about God, we want to know God. People who know about God are religious, proud, judgmental, and haughty. People who know God are humble, gentle, and respectful of God and others. Religious people try not to sin because they are trying to keep the rules. Believers do not sin because it is not consistent with their character as it conforms itself to God's character.

2. HE REVEALS TRUTH (Vs. 6 & 10)

In addition to revealing Himself to us, verses 6 and 10 inform us that God reveals truth to us. Let me be politically incorrect here. Everyone's idea of spirituality is not correct; there is only one source of truth. Look at verse 6. Remember, when we see the word LORD in all capital letters, that refers to God's personal Name, Jehovah or Yahweh, whichever you prefer. Knowledge, wisdom, and truth only come from God of the Bible. All truth in the world is measured in how it

measures up against God's truth. We may have compassion for people of other religions, but the fact is, they are wrong in their beliefs. God is the One who brings truth to us. As we acknowledge truth, and act on truth, we find the peace that surpasses all understanding guarding our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." That seems to be straightforward and clear.

Look at the picture in verse 10. Wisdom enters our heart and soul and takes residence there. When we become Christians, Jesus takes up residence in our hearts through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

3. HE REVEALS PROTECTION (Vs. 7-8, & 11)

In addition to God revealing Himself to us, and revealing truth to us, He reveals His protection of us in verses 7-8 and verse 11. Let's first look at verse 11. Discretion and understanding will protect and guard us and it doesn't matter how old or young we are, it is never too late to learn. If we learn to make Godly choices, God will protect our Christian walk. If you are following closely, you may say, "How did he get Christian walk out of that verse?" It seems to say that discretion and understanding will guard us physically from harm. There are two things here, first, the Proverbs are not meant to be absolute truth, and Proverbs are generalizations. For example, if 80% of deaths in people under 30 are alcohol related, and I am under 30 and don't drink, then I have a pretty good chance of not dying. However, not drinking does not guarantee I will not die before 30. It merely gives me an 80% better chance. So in the first place, we cannot be absolute with any one proverb. They are meant to be poetic.

Secondly, we have to look for clues in their parallel passages. Now even though I believe, there is an element of physical safety alluded to in verse 11, look back at verses 7-8, these promises are made to the believer. Now look at the last word in verse 8, the faithful ones, or as the NASB

has it, the Godly ones, the word in Hebrew is Hesedim, which means the holy ones, the ones who love God and are faithful to Him, but this is impossible to define in one word. Verse 7 describes the holy ones as upright and blameless. Verse 8 just adds to the list. The ones who are lovingly faithful to God are upright, blameless, and just. The New Testament calls them saints, holy ones, those set apart by God.

Now look at what part of their lives are described as their walk with God. Look at the words used in verses 7-8: walk, course, and way. One of the ways the pietists used to greet each other was by asking, "How's your walk with God?"

We must continually remind ourselves that it was God Who set us on this journey of faith. In Philippians, the Apostle Paul reminds us that God will be sure that we complete our faith journeys successfully. If we continue to pursue holiness, humbly and diligently, then God will ensure the victory. Look at the military terms in verses 7,8, and 11. He holds the victory. He is our shield. He guards and protects us. The only things that can derail our walk with God are pride, arrogance, closing our selves off to God, or being dishonest with Him, our selves, and others. The wonderful truth is this: **IF WE ARE HUMBLE AND SINCERE, GOD WILL REVEAL HIMSELF TO US.** God's Holy Spirit will definitely lead us to all truth.

II. GOD'S SPIRIT GUIDES US (Vs. 12-19)

IF WE FOLLOW THE SPIRIT'S LEADING, WE WILL HAVE VICTORY OVER SIN.

Verses 12-19 inform us that God's Spirit guides us. **IF WE FOLLOW THE SPIRIT'S LEADING, WE WILL HAVE VICTORY OVER SIN.** Remember Jesus' prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from all evil?" Do you remember that the Apostle Paul told us that God would not allow us to be tempted beyond our capability to resist, and that He would provide a way of escape for us? When faced with temptation, God's Holy Spirit is leading us away from sin

and towards victory. Most of us continue to sin because we depend on our own power and that is why we do not experience lasting victory over sin. The Holy Spirit helps us stay off the road to confusion.

A. STAYING OFF THE ROAD TO CONFUSION (Vs. 12-15)

These few verses have to do with developing patterns of right thinking. The theme here is that wise thinking will keep us safe from wrong thinking. Look at the words used to describe people who want to confuse our thinking. They are described as wicked, perverse, crooked, and devious. The nature of these words can be summed up as twisted or turned around in the wrong direction.

Look also at the theme of our Christian walk here. Words like ways, walk, and path are used. I have seen so many Christians discouraged, depressed, anxious, and many have lost their way because of wrong thinking. As a pastor, I can tell you that in over 25 years of ministry, most problems people face are with correcting wrong thinking. I'm really sad to say this, but the majority of Christians never grow in their faith beyond the infant stage.

Let me address our young people here this morning. You have an incredible opportunity to get a great start in your Christian walk. If you take advantage of all God offers you through the church -- learning to study your Bibles, coming to church on Sundays and worshipping, going to youth group, being mentored and disciplined, you will be able to avoid a lot of pitfalls. You will learn to have the right expectations of life.

When television tries to tell you that being involved in a sexual relationship is normal at your age, you will be able to say, "Why don't they show us the story 5 months from now when the young girl is pregnant, and the boy is nowhere to be found?" When friends try to get you to drink or to take drugs, you will immediately remember that your lives are to be under the influence of the

Holy Spirit, not drugs or alcohol. Make no mistake we live in a perverted and twisted society, but we must hold on to the promise Wisdom gave us, which was mentioned back in verses 5-11 God will protect us. The Holy Spirit will apply God's wisdom to our hearts and souls. If you desire to mature in your Christian walk, and apply yourself to it, nothing can derail you.

Now let me address the adults. Many of you are discouraged and depressed, many of you have stopped pursuing holiness and many of you are confused because God has disappointed you or let you down. The problem with adults is that we have confused our culture and our expectations with God's.

An example of this is, in our Declaration of Independence we say that it is a God-given right to pursue happiness. Can you show me that in the Bible? We have come to believe that if we apply ourselves, study hard, and work hard, that we will enjoy success. Can you show me that in the Bible? We believe that God helps those who help themselves. What chapter and verse do we find that?

We have become great Americans, but we have lost our Christian identity. The Bible says that we are to pursue holiness not happiness, and the Bible says that if we diligently apply ourselves to pursuing holiness, we are likely to suffer because of it. And, the Bible portrays God as helping those who cannot help themselves.

Most Christians do not face setbacks well because they do not have right thinking. Let me just make a plea here to all of us this morning. If we are suffering, please do not add to the suffering by wrong thinking about God, because He does want to protect us and keep us on our Christian walk. That is the first part of our thinking that we must correct. We were created for God. He does not exist for us. Our primary goal in life is to love and serve God, not the other way around. In humility, we must get our thinking right. Jesus, the most perfect human that ever lived,

was abandoned, betrayed, lonely, and humiliated. He was tortured, suffered, and died a horrific death. What is it that we expect to receive from life "because we are so good?"

B. STAYING OFF THE ROAD TO DEATH (Vs. 16-19)

If the Holy Spirit does not guide our thinking, then we are doomed to depression, anxiety, fear, and anger. But as verses 16-19 point out, right behavior will assist us in staying off the road to death. Now even though these verses seem to talk about illicit sex, I think in this case, the meaning is much broader. I would include all sorts of sexual misconduct, but it includes much more, again, words are used to tempt us off the path of right. The picture is one of a beautiful young woman, who has turned her back on God. She is out for adventure and she seduces us to follow her. In the case of women, it would be a handsome young man, well-built, well-dressed, smooth talking, and he has a hint of danger. He invites you to join him in seeking adventure.

Now, let me tell you why I think this is more than sexual. In the Bible, God referred to Himself as the groom and His people as His bride. Whenever Israel forgot about God, followed worldly ways, and ended up in idolatry, God framed this in terms of adultery. When we became Christians, we, in essence became the brides and grooms of Christ. We should act the same way toward Jesus, as we would expect our husband or wife to act towards us. When we chase other things, we are saying to Jesus, "You are not enough for me. I need to go and find other lovers." If we are looking for happiness in a job, money, success, power, a relationship, or in anything else, we are committing idolatry.

Please keep in mind Satan is going to dress these temptations nicely. What man does not desire to be loved by a beautiful, sexy, adventurous woman? And what woman does not desire to be loved by a dashing, well-dressed, smooth, romantic, and adventurous man? Who isn't captivated

by exotic places, foods, and adventures? Be careful to always examine why you are going, and where you are going.

Wrong behavior puts us on the road to death. Those are God's words, not mine. Look at verses 18-19. Once we follow evil down the road, there is no return. Again, let me extend this warning to all of us. I know there are a lot of counselors out there saying that marriages can be saved, but once a spouse commits adultery, it's pretty hard to re-establish trust again. Once you get the AIDS virus, it is only a matter of time before you die. For those who get addicted to drugs or alcohol, there is not much chance of getting well. These grim statistics are pretty obvious. But think about these: If you gossip, the person whom you have slandered has had his or her reputation murdered. None of us can resurrect the dead. If you are holding on to anger or a grudge, you are killing yourself and others. Once you go down that road long enough, Satan gets a foothold, and you will not be able to grow as a Christian. If you are a person who is religious, and who acts religiously, it will not be long before you become angry and judgmental, and do not let me forget to add self-righteous.

Again, in verses 5-11, God has promised to give us victory in our Christian walk if we learn to depend on His Holy Spirit. Let me say this: If we continually fill our minds with right thinking, and if we continue to act out right behavior, we will find the peace and joy that God has for us, but that takes the intentional humbling of ourselves by being vulnerable and admitting to God and others that without Jesus, we can do nothing. It takes a receptive heart to invite the Holy Spirit to fill our minds and empower our actions, and it takes a diligent attitude to take our thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ, without God's Holy Spirit applying wisdom to our lives, it is impossible. Here is the promise: **IF WE FOLLOW THE SPIRIT'S LEADING, WE WILL HAVE VICTORY OVER SIN.** What incredible promises we have received so far: the Holy

Spirit will lead us to all truth, and He will guide us as well, and God will lead us into all truth and He will protect us.

III. GOD'S SPIRIT COMFORTS US (Vs. 20-22)

AS WE DEMONSTRATE OUR LOVE FOR GOD THROUGH HUMBLE OBEDIENCE, HIS SPIRIT WILL COMFORT US AND REASSURE US IN OUR CHRISTIAN WALK.

In verses 20-22, we are told that God's Spirit comforts us. Let me give an example of correct thinking. The Christian walk is not an easy walk it is very difficult. It is often painful, and it takes a lot of courage. There will be times when we feel like giving up. But here is a promise that will help us to go on. **AS WE DEMONSTRATE OUR LOVE FOR GOD THROUGH HUMBLE OBEDIENCE, HIS SPIRIT WILL COMFORT US AND REASSURE US IN OUR CHRISTIAN WALK.** The Holy Spirit will comfort us and encourage us to stay on course.

A. STAYING ON COURSE (V. 20)

Look at verse 20. When we get discouraged, we are often tempted to take an easier route. However, the Holy Spirit encourages us to stay on the path of righteousness and the Bible assures us, that others before us successfully managed to stay on course and finish the race. Take some time to read about people who have managed to stay on course in Hebrews chapter 11; there you will discover that we are on the same course. Let's not forget that the Holy Spirit comforts and encourages us to stay on course.

B. FINISHING THE RACE (V. 21)

In verse 21, we are encouraged and comforted to know that we will finish the race. I know when we run the marathon we have trained and prepared ourselves for the run. However, people who came out to watch and cheer made a huge difference they were like having an incredible energy boost. The Holy Spirit energizes us and keeps us focused on the prize. When we finished the marathon, we got a medal and a plaque, but when we finish our Christian race, Jesus Himself

will come up to us, embrace us, and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." I don't know about you, but that gives me chills.

D. TAKING A WRONG TURN (22)

I don't know why the poet chose to end on a down sentiment, but he did. Verse 22 reminds us that some of us will take a wrong turn and end up in disaster and that people who reject God will end up in disaster. Take the nation of Israel as an example. After repeated warnings to repent, and after their unrepentant disobedience to God, God finally destroyed Israel and sent the people into the Babylonian captivity. After that experience, Israel never followed false Gods again. If you ever want to see what life is like when God chooses to take a stand against us, just read the short book of Lamentations. That is a very sobering ten-minute read.

God gave us the Holy Spirit. **AS WE DEMONSTRATE OUR LOVE FOR GOD THROUGH HUMBLE OBEDIENCE, HIS SPIRIT WILL COMFORT US AND REASSURE US IN OUR CHRISTIAN WALK.**

It seems to me that we are called to make a choice. We have been presented with two females in these two chapters. Lady Wisdom will lead us to God and life. The female adulteress will lead us away from God and to death. **GOD'S DESIRE IS THAT WE LIVE FULL, ABUNDANT LIVES. HE HAS FILLED US WITH HIS HOLY SPIRIT. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT COMFORTS US, GUIDES US, AND LEADS US INTO ALL TRUTH.**

What a blessing that God has given us His Holy Spirit to live in us, to guide us, to comfort us, and to lead us into all truth. We truly are common vessels that contain God. We are Holy Grail.

But, the sad thing is that many of our friends and family think they are living the American dream when in actuality they are lost.

"One lady tells the story of taking her grandsons, ages four and six, to spend a day at Disneyland. During the course of the day she bought each of them a little flag. On

several occasions they stopped to watch the marching band of TOY soldiers and each time the boys would be spellbound as the band marched by. All at once the grandmother realized that the four-year-old was gone. She searched everywhere, calling his name and making her way through the crowd. As she sat down to catch her breath and try to determine what to do next, she looked up to see the marching band of toy soldiers. There, at the end of the line, smiling merrily, and waving his flag, was little Mikey, having the time of his life, completely unaware that he was lost! How like the world, going on its merry way, unaware of a loving Father's concern for its lostness. But someday the band will stop playing then and only then will those unreached realize that they are lost."

Please continue to remember that we believe in a triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

God the Holy Spirit indwells us. He guides us, He comforts us, and He leads us into all truth.

Please, never forget that. His desire is that we live life to the fullest.