

Make Your Ear Attentive

By Natalie Madsen

*“My son, let them not vanish from your sight; keep sound wisdom and discretion,
So they will be life to your soul and adornment to your neck.*

Then you will walk in your way securely and your foot will not stumble.”

(Proverbs 3:21-23 NASB)

In the early years of the United States, whenever gold was found or claimed to have been found, settlers' ears perked up, and they flocked around general stores and swapped dream stories. Many settlers uprooted themselves and sometimes their families to journey to areas potentially filled with treasure. Most of these pioneers gave up their very livelihoods and threw everything aside to seek their gold. During the California Gold Rush, a flood of “forty-niners” sacrificed their income, farms, health, and sometimes family to get a taste of the gold nuggets found in the West. The surge of settlers to California caused towns to grow and communities to plant.

Most settlers dedicated long, hard hours toward tedious panning, mining, and picking for gold. Despite the hot sun and often dangerous environments wearing them down, they were determined to persevere. Some, however, wilted at the work and returned home without a single piece of gold dust. Some settlers' families stayed in California's new settlements to prosper from their town businesses. Some men died. Some, though, worked hard until finally giving up and returning home. A few struck rich.

Was it worth the laborious months apart from their families? And for those who died in pursuit of their gold – was their labor all in vain? Whatever their motives, most of the settlers worked diligently and attentively, seeking their treasure and inclining their hearts toward this endeavor. As Christians, we are called to do likewise in seeking wisdom and discernment.

“Make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding;

For if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding....”

(Proverbs 2:2-3)

Each of these statements has an action verb – we should be *making* our ears attentive and *inclining* our hearts to understanding! We must diligently seek the wisdom of the Lord, and we must seek it from Him because “*the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding*” (Proverbs 2:6). And not only must we be actively seeking discernment from the Lord, but we must be diligent to pursue it at the cost of our own desires and our own dreams. I experienced something last year that was difficult for me to get through because I knew I had to seek the Lord's Will and ask for Him to be my wisdom in this situation. I knew what He wanted me to do and did it, despite its difficulty, but I also knew very clearly how much easier it would have been if I had ignored this calling to seek His Wisdom! But He doesn't call us to an easy journey.

“If you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures;

Then you will discern the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God.”

(Proverbs 2:4-5)

Oh, the trials those settlers must have gone through – and their families! What they sought was worldly gain – temporary wealth – or an adventure to benefit themselves. If they sacrificed their own wants in order to pursue these precious metals, how much more should we work to seek wisdom and discernment, whose *“profit is better than the profit of silver”* and whose *“gain better than fine gold”* (Proverbs 3:14)! When the Lord is our wisdom, *“discretion will guard you, understanding will watch over you, to deliver you from the way of evil”* (Proverbs 2:11), for the Lord *“is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice, and He preserves the way of His godly ones”* (Proverbs 2:7-8).

Seeking is a continual action until a need for it is satisfied, and we will never be so wise in ourselves to not need to cry out for discernment from Him! We serve a Creator God, who *“by wisdom founded the earth, by understanding He established the heavens”* (Proverbs 3:19). With His help and His wisdom, He will deliver us from *“those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness...”* (Proverbs 2:13). We lack the discernment needed to avoid the pitfalls and landmines through this world that is our temporary dwelling.

How do we seek it? Seeking is not sitting still and hoping it’ll come, and seeking is not testing the Lord’s answers in different situations. We need to seek for wisdom as we would precious stones – we must spend *time* and *effort*, humbling ourselves before the Father in Heaven and *asking* Him to show us His Will – to be *our* wisdom. We need to soak ourselves in His Word so that His truth permeates through us...our lives should be beating to the heartbeat of His Gospel, His Truth! We must fear Him! Fear our King with a reverent fear: *“Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones”* (Proverbs 3:7-8).

I encourage you to view discernment as a precious stone and seek for it diligently! Seek for it in Him – the only True Wisdom...seek it in prayer and reading His Word...seek it continually, tirelessly. I pray you will take to heart the determination of those settlers in seeking such a worldly gain in your own search for His discernment. I pray you *make your ear attentive* and *incline your heart* and *cry out* to the Lord for wisdom, a treasure far greater than any fine metals and a precious thing incomparable to the world’s riches.

*“My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments;
For length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.
Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck,
Write them on the tablet of your heart.”*
(Proverbs 3:1-3)