

## The Greatest Treasures

Proverbs 23:22, 23  
Charlie Brackett

When we think of priceless treasures, we are prone to think in terms of material objects such as crown jewels or rare artwork or some other material treasure that is so expensive or rare that we use the term "priceless." Solomon speaks from Proverbs 23:22, 23 about treasures which are truly priceless; they cannot be bought at any price:

Listen to your father who begat you,  
And do not despise your mother when she is old.  
Buy truth, and do not sell it,  
Get wisdom and instruction and understanding.

First, Solomon mentioned father and mother. Of course, parents cannot be bought and, in that sense, they *are* priceless, but considering the context, Solomon may be speaking more of their love and experience than he is of them personally.

Then he established the value of truth. Buy it, and do not sell it. Of course, truth cannot be literally bought. The thought is to acquire truth and do not let it escape you for any consideration. Truth is so precious it should be the focal point of one's acquisitions; it should be hoarded.

Having established the importance of truth, Solomon advised the acquisition of wisdom, instruction and understanding. I believe the statement, "Get wisdom and instruction and understanding," is parallel with and generally equivalent to the previous thought, "Buy truth,..". The acquisition of truth in one's life is felt in one of these three areas: wisdom, instruction or understanding. Someone might ask, "Aren't wisdom, instruction and understanding the same?" Not really.

Understanding deals particularly with perception. Truth must be understood to be useful. Knowing a thing without grasping its meaning is abstract and unproductive. What does it mean? is what really counts. Understanding has to do with the intellect. It is getting at the intelligence of a matter.

Instruction is different. The thought here is discipline, or training. The pursuit and acquisition of truth requires diligent effort, rigorous discipline. One cannot have understanding of truth without being instructed in truth. Instruction focuses on the message whether or not understood.

Wisdom is the application, or use of what is learned. Wisdom is skill with knowledge. You might know truth, but if you can't put it to good use, you lack wisdom. Some might think wisdom to be the greatest of the three because wisdom is where the rubber meets the road. It is the bottom line. But without discipline and understanding wisdom cannot exist, for wisdom is the proper exercise of that which is learned and understood.