

Proverbs 16:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly.

Analysis

Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly. *מִקְוָר חַיִּים סְகָהֵל בְּעֵלֵי* (a fountain of life is understanding to its possessor). Understanding provides perpetual refreshment and vitality. *וּמְסֻר אַוְלִים אַוְלָת* (but the discipline of fools is folly). Fools' instruction is inherently foolish—they can't give what they don't have. Believers have access to infinite wisdom in Christ (Colossians 2:3) and should drink from this wellspring rather than foolish instruction that only produces more folly.

Historical Context

Wellsprings provided continuous fresh water—essential for life in arid climates. Stagnant pools bred disease. This proverb contrasts living water (understanding) with poisonous pools (foolish instruction). Jesus offered living water (John 4:14, 7:37-38)—understanding flowing from relationship with Him. Early Christians rejected foolish philosophies for the life-giving wisdom of the gospel (Colossians 2:8).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. Are you drinking from the wellspring of biblical understanding or poisonous pools of foolish instruction?
2. What sources of teaching and wisdom are you consuming, and are they life-giving or folly-producing?
3. How does Jesus as living water provide the ultimate wellspring of understanding and life?

Interlinear Text

רִמְמָתִים מִקְדָּשׁ מִזְבֵּחַ כְּלֵל יְהִי בָּעֵל וְרִמְמָתִים
is a wellspring of life Understanding unto him that hath it but the instruction
H4726 H2416 H7922 H1167 H4148

אַלְתָּה אַוְלֵדִים
of fools is folly
H191 H200

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 13:14 (Parallel theme): The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

Matthew 15:14 (Parallel theme): Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

John 6:63 (Parallel theme): It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

Proverbs 10:11 (Parallel theme): The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

John 5:24 (Parallel theme): Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Proverbs 18:4 (Parallel theme): The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook.

Proverbs 15:28 (Parallel theme): The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.

Proverbs 15:2 (Parallel theme): The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.

Proverbs 14:27 (Parallel theme): The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

John 6:68 (Parallel theme): Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

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