

Proverbs 17:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom,
seeing he hath no heart to it?

Analysis

Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it? Fools may have resources (mechir, מְכִירָה, price, money) to acquire wisdom—access to teachers, books, education—yet lack heart (lev, לֵב, heart, will, desire) to pursue it. Resources without desire are worthless. This proverb mourns wasted opportunities. Many people have Bible access, Christian education, wise mentors but no heart for wisdom. Without the fear of the LORD (Proverbs 1:7), resources are useless. Christ offers living water freely (John 7:37), but those without thirst won't drink.

Historical Context

In ancient Israel, accessing wisdom required resources—time to study rather than labor, money for travel to teachers, ability to access Torah scrolls. Yet many with these advantages pursued folly instead. Solomon had infinite resources and wisdom itself, yet his son Rehoboam had the price but not the heart (1 Kings 12:8). The rich young ruler had resources to follow Jesus but lacked heart (Matthew 19:16-22). Modern parallel: many with Bible access never read it.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What 'price' (resources, opportunities, access) for gaining wisdom do you possess but aren't using?
2. Do you have the heart—deep desire and commitment—to pursue wisdom, or just external opportunities?
3. How can you cultivate heart hunger for God's wisdom rather than merely possessing resources to obtain it?

Interlinear Text

לֹא	מֵ	הַ	זֶה	מִן	יְרֵ	בַּ	יד	לְ	לֹא	זֶה	כִּס	יְלֵ	לְ	
H4100	H2088													
Wherefore	is	there	a	price		in	the	hand	of	a	fool	to	get	
					H4242		H3027		H3684			H7069		
וְ	תִּ	רְ	אַ	לְ	בַּ	אַ	לְ	לְ	וְ	תִּ	רְ	אַ	לְ	
wisdom	see	ing	he	hath	no	heart								
H2451					H3820									
						H369								

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 23:23 (Parallel theme): Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.

Proverbs 18:15 (Parallel theme): The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.

2 Corinthians 6:1 (Parallel theme): We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

Deuteronomy 5:29 (Parallel theme): O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

