

## Proverbs 9:8-12

<sup>8</sup>Do not warn a mocker, or he will hate you.

Warn a wise person, and he will love you.

<sup>9</sup>Give advice to a wise person, and he will become even wiser.

Teach a righteous person, and he will add to his learning.

<sup>10</sup>The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,  
and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding,

<sup>11</sup>because through me your days will be multiplied,  
and years will be added to your life.

<sup>12</sup>If you are wise, you are wise to your own advantage.  
But if you scoff, you alone will bear the consequences.

## Graduate School

### I.

I, Pastor Schamber, have something in common with Bill Gates and Steve Jobs. You might be wondering what that could be. Both of them made billions of dollars, so you know that isn't it, because Pastor Schamber isn't a billionaire. Both of them loved computers and technology, and I suppose that is something I have in common with them, but that's not it, either.

What I have in common with Bill Gates and Steve Jobs is that I quit. Each of us started college, only to quit. Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and Pastor Schamber were all college dropouts.

Of the three of us, only I ever officially returned to college and earned a degree. Sure, Bill Gates got an honorary doctorate from Harvard, but that was *honorary*. My degree was real. It was a bumpy road, however.

The reason I quit college was that I didn't know for sure if I wanted to be a pastor. In fact, I thought I most surely did *not* want to be a pastor. I had only started undergraduate school in a pre-seminary college because that was where several of my friends had gone. I didn't have any real drive to finish. So I quit.

There I was in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, in basic training to be an artilleryman in the army. I met the first atheist I had ever known personally. And the second. Soon after that, the third. I found myself taking out a little pocket Bible to talk to them about Jesus and what he had done for all people. I began to think that maybe going back to college and continuing this path to the ministry might be the right thing for me.

After my time in service to Uncle Sam was ended, I went back to school to be a pastor. I almost quit again. It was speech class that almost did me in. I had to give a 3-5 minute speech using note cards. My hands were shaking. My knees were knocking. I was sweating profusely. I thought to myself: "how am I ever going to be a pastor and preach a sermon every week if I can't stand in front of a class of about 15 people and give a 5 minute speech? I should quit while I'm still ahead."

### II.

Are you a quitter? Maybe it wasn't studying for the ministry that you quit. Maybe it wasn't even college in general that you quit. Maybe it was God.

Rather than being college dropouts, many, many people are God dropouts. They've had enough, they think, and just want to get out. There are all kinds of reasons.

God dropouts are easy to spot in the comments sections of any article about science or religion. Years of secular education have convinced them that religion is just a crutch for simple-minded people. Solomon says: "Do not warn a mocker, or he will hate you"

(Proverbs 9:8, EHV). God dropouts lurk in the comments to show their vast, superior intellect to foolish Christians. They have such superior understanding to all the intellectually vacant Christians. Just ask them. Or don't. They'll always volunteer the information to you, whether you want to hear it or not.

Some God dropouts might not be quite so obvious. These are people who attended Sunday School for years and heard all the Bible History stories. They might even be able to recall many of the facts from their Bible History lessons. Not only was there Bible History in their past, they even went to Catechism classes with the pastor and were confirmed. But then, something happened. They decided that what they had learned in Sunday School and Catechism classes was enough. They had learned enough. They had enough education to get by on. There is no need to acquire more knowledge. Perhaps they decide that they have enough to rarely or never attend church, because they have learned what they need to know. Perhaps they come to worship services, but are convinced that all they need is a little booster shot to get through the coming week—or two—or ten—and then they can come back for another booster.

Bill Gates and Steve Jobs—and even I, myself—have something else in common. Though all three quit school, all three kept on learning. All three realized that there isn't supposed to be an end of education, just a change in education. It is important to continue to learn things throughout life.

The ongoing quest for knowledge brings up yet another kind of God dropout. This one might be the most insidious of all, because they look quite intellectually healthy—even from a spiritual perspective. I've known many. This kind *wants* to know all kinds of information. All kinds of information from God's Word. All kinds of *Bible* knowledge. This God dropout isn't exactly a dropout, because this kind of person is constantly reading the Word of God and wanting to know more and more of what God says.

The problem isn't the quest for knowledge, it's what *kind* of knowledge. There are tons of Christian authors that feed this kind of quest for knowledge. The problem is really that such a person is more interested in knowledge than in *wisdom*. This person sees the Bible as a source for practical pearls—little things you can learn from the Bible to make your life better. The Bible basically becomes a handbook. Look to the Bible to discover secrets for raising your family, and for moral values for your life. Look to the Bible to find secrets for molding your life to be kind and considerate, as Jesus said you should, to experience success in the workplace or with friends. Some have even claimed to have cracked the biblical code of numerology to help you learn how to invest in the stock market.

If all the Bible is to you is a handbook, perhaps you have become a God dropout. If you see God's Word as something for the intellectually weak who need a crutch like God to help them get through life, perhaps you have become a God dropout.

### III.

“Warn a wise person, and he will love you. <sup>9</sup>Give advice to a wise person, and he will become even wiser. Teach a righteous person, and he will add to his learning” (Proverbs 9:8-9, EHV).

The wise person takes correction and advice and continues to learn and grow. The Bible is *so much* more than a handbook for good living.

You might have noticed in all your Bible study that there *is* a *lot* in the Bible that pertains to good living. The Commandments God gave his Old Testament people Israel gave them some rules about what God wants and expects of people. Jesus explained those same rules in the New Testament and showed that the letter of God's Moral Law went much deeper—that thoughts and attitudes were just as important as outward words and actions

when it comes to following God's Moral Law.

What all that means is this: if you have been looking to God's Word as a handbook on good living, you will be led from Jesus' instruction to come to the conclusion that you have failed miserably. In fact, that's what all the Old Testament worship ceremonies were supposed to show the Israelite people. They made their sacrifices. They watched the High Priest go through all the elaborate preparations for the Great Day of Atonement, and then carefully follow all the Lord's requirements to a T as he entered the Most Holy Place with the sacrifice for the sins of the people. All of it was to point out to them that it was impossible to please God by following his Word as a handbook. They needed something more. They needed a Savior.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10, EHV). The reality is—the Bible is *all* about Jesus. Jesus is the only reason the Bible was written. Jesus himself said it best. He said: "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through me" (John 14:6, EHV).

God wants something for you. It is something even more valuable than knowledge about good living. It is something far better than a handbook to follow to make things better in your life. God wants you to know about Jesus and what *he* has done for you and for your salvation. Jesus is what the Bible is all about. Jesus did it all for you. An ongoing quest for biblical knowledge is *not* a bad thing—as long as that quest for biblical knowledge has as its base and center the central figure in the Bible—Jesus and what he came to do for your salvation.

#### IV.

Stay in graduate school. Continue to have the attitude that there is more to learn from God's Word. Bible History can show you how God blessed believers of the past, even when they did not know the details of his plan of salvation. The "rules" of God's Moral Law can show you that, though it is impossible to please God by keeping his law perfectly, since no one can, God still had a plan to bring you to heaven. He sent Jesus to carry it out. The Bible as a handbook for life *does* have good tips and strategies, but only when you consider them in the light of what Jesus has done for you, and when you realize that your attitude in following these things works best only when it springs from gratitude in your heart to God.

God has promises for you as a student in his graduate school. "Through me your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life" (Proverbs 9:11, EHV). This doesn't mean that you will necessarily live to a ripe old age because you are a believer, but that God will bless you, perhaps even with a longer life than you would otherwise have had if you had not possessed godly wisdom.

"Give advice to a wise person, and he will become even wiser. Teach a righteous person, and he will add to his learning" (Proverbs 9:9, EHV). God promises that you will become even wiser as you continue to use his Word for edification. You will grow in your learning. You will grow in your understanding.

"If you are wise, you are wise to your own advantage." (Proverbs 9:12, EHV). The benefits of wisdom are not just theoretical. Wisdom blesses you, the individual believer.

Don't be afraid to stay in graduate school. Don't be afraid to continue the life of a believer. Mockers will hate you, but the wise will love you—especially those who have learned wisdom from you. Those you bring to know their Savior as you do will be with you for all eternity.

God bless your continued studies in the graduate school of Christian faith. Amen.