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Godly Wisdom

James 3:13–17 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.¹

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1 Introduction

The Bible has a great deal to say about wisdom, scattered throughout its 66 books; in the NIV translation the word *wisdom* occurs over 250 times and the word *wise* occurs 186 times. (You may find it fruitful to do a word-study on ‘wisdom’ and ‘wise’.) The Book of Proverbs, in particular, is especially rich with wisdom, much like the caffeine in an energy drink.

2 What is Wisdom?

To better understand what the word *wisdom* means, it will be helpful to draw a contrast between the words *wisdom* and *knowledge* since they are related yet different. Knowledge and wisdom are words pertaining in part to learning.

“The source of knowledge is study; the source of wisdom is discernment. Knowledge is generally theoretical; wisdom is always practical.” — Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones [3, pg. 65]

Knowledge is having information in your head, information that you understand; and this information must consist of truths, facts, principles, or axioms. There is no knowledge in having lies, conspiracy theories, bad data, or misinformation in your head. Knowledge is something that we learn from subject matter experts, books, research, experiments, life experiences, and other sources of factual information. Almost anybody can acquire knowledge if they have a willingness to learn, i.e., an open mind. However a person with knowledge can lack sense, that is, lack the wisdom of how to apply his knowledge, thus making him foolish.

“Many of the world’s problems are caused by knowledgeable fools.”
— Derek Prince

Today mankind has as more knowledge than at anytime in history. Libraries cannot contain all the books man has written. The internet supposedly contains all the knowledge of mankind, yet it falls short. Mankind’s creations, books, artwork, music, etc. are still being digitized for access via the internet.

Despite all of man’s knowledge, it hasn’t solved the world’s problems. We still have hunger, poverty, crime, wars, and so on. These same problems existed for millennia, and in a sense the world hasn’t changed. There are new problems: are we going to destroy the Earth due to global warming? Will we destroy ourselves by a nuclear war?

Wisdom on the other hand, is the sound application of knowledge; it is having discernment; it is the ability to correctly judge between right and wrong, true and false. Wisdom promotes human flourishing. Where there are gaps in knowledge, wisdom can make correct inferences through evidence, reasoning, and logic. Knowledge without wisdom is not necessarily useful.

3 Two Kinds of Wisdom

In the Bible there are two kinds of wisdom, the first kind is *human* or *worldly* wisdom, which is of limited value. The second kind of wisdom is *Godly* or *Biblical* wisdom, this is the more important and more valuable type of wisdom, as we shall see. Each and every day we must choose between God's way or the way of the world; between godly wisdom or human wisdom.

3.1 Human Wisdom

Human wisdom is a god-given endowment, and we have done amazing things with it. As we go through life, the open minded person acquires human wisdom—life lessons from which we hopefully accrue wisdom, especially from our own mistakes and the mistakes of others. While human wisdom is of some value, it is foolishness compared to Godly wisdom, which we will discuss in the next section.

Mankind has learned about nature, created great works of art, literature, and music. We have global communications that allow us to send messages around the world in seconds. We have visited the deepest parts of the oceans and made round-trips to the moon. Mankind has achieved many great accomplishments and we can feel good about those things.

But, there's always a but. Man's sinful nature permeates our hearts and minds, it corrupts us completely. Using wisdom that was meant for our good, we have through the sins of pride and selfishness, decided in our wisdom that we don't need God. We think we are so clever. We give glory to ourselves rather than God, who in fact sustains us in every way. We think we are inherently good, ignoring our true nature which is that of sin and evil. We pursue our own selfish and self-centered desires, following the ways of our flesh, the world, and the devil. The cause of the world's problems is that men glory in themselves and rely upon themselves rather than God.

Human knowledge and wisdom are limited to the physical world around us. We are totally oblivious to the spiritual realm. Human wisdom is inadequate and insufficient. It does not enable a man to know his true self, or God, or the meaning of life, or how to live morally. It cannot explain why the world is as it is or help in our facing our own death. We cannot overcome the spiritual forces of evil or stand before God's power. Even the great philosophers of Greece could not know God, as the apostle Paul found while in Athens:

Acts 17:23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

We know that tobacco, illicit drugs, and excessive alcohol use are addictive and bad for us. Yet, everyday people take up these vices. Knowledge does not necessarily change our behavior. We cannot attain morality through knowledge, education and teaching, as the Old Testament clearly teaches us through the history of Israel. The New Testament tells us that we are incapable of living God's standards of morality:

Romans 8:7 *The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.*

We already saw in the passage from James chapter 3 at the top of this teaching that human wisdom is earthly and demonic. Below is a sample of what the apostle Paul writes about human wisdom:

1 Corinthians 1:21 (CEV) *God was wise and decided not to let the people of this world use their wisdom to learn about him. Instead, God chose to save only those who believe the foolish message we preach.*

1 Corinthians 1:25 *For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.*

1 Corinthians 2:4–5 *My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.*

1 Corinthians 3:19–20 *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness"; and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile."*

Human wisdom alone does not inspire us to search for our creator, nor to recognize him in our midst:

Romans 1:22–23 *Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.*

We may think we are wise by human standards, but God considers the idea of human wisdom to be foolishness and he will thwart the efforts of the self-proclaimed wise person. Many people who are, in fact, very intelligent by human standards, repudiate the Gospel of Jesus Christ, so a person can be smart in one sense but lacking in Godly wisdom and the knowledge of God; rejecting God's plan for salvation due to their own arrogance.

Proverbs 3:7 *Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.*

Human wisdom can be earthly, unspiritual, and demonic as the apostle James wrote. This is especially true when we allow such wisdom to contradict or supersede what the Bible teaches. Consider the bad advice based upon the human wisdom of Job's three friends which they gave Job in the *Book of Job*. The crimes of the Pharisees, Scribes, Sadducees was their arrogance, they sought to add to scripture by creating their own laws. Many churches have been poisoned by letting human wisdom override scripture. (See my teaching entitled [Problems in the Church](#).)

Consider all the human wisdom and scientific knowledge that people have accumulated over the past 2,000+ years. Nothing that mankind has learned in all that time has brought him closer to God, nor saves him from eternal damnation.

As we study theology or attain wisdom, there is a great danger of becoming arrogant, hubristic, or boastful, even thinking we are better than others. We must

remember to remain humble as we grow in wisdom and the knowledge Christ. In fact, humility is one means of acquiring Godly wisdom, as we shall see further on.

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

We may think we are ruled by our minds, but in reality foolish people are ruled by their hearts and emotions. Jeremiah is in effect saying that our emotions deceive us. We seldom make correct decisions based on our emotions. We are sort of “out of our minds” until we are born again and begin to apply Godly wisdom. Only then can we begin making logical decisions using our minds and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.

3.2 Godly Wisdom

Isaiah 55:8–9 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

In our introductory verse [on page 1](#), the Apostle James wrote “the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.” We call this kind of wisdom *Godly wisdom*.

What does the Bible tell us about Godly wisdom? God gave certain people wisdom so that they could accomplish great things in accordance with God’s purposes:

Acts 7:9–10 “Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh king of Egypt. So Pharaoh made him ruler over Egypt and all his palace.

Because of Solomon’s faithful obedience to God, God appeared to Solomon at Gibeon and told Solomon to ask for whatever he wanted. Notice Solomon’s genuine humility in responding to God:

1 Kings 3:5–14 At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.” Solomon answered, “You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.

“Now, LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?”

The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, “Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both wealth and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. And if you walk in obedience to me and keep my decrees and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.”

In the New Testament, as in the Old, God gave people wisdom to accomplish great things, especially preaching, teaching, and to defend their faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

Colossians 1:28 He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.

We read of Stephan’s God-given wisdom before he was martyred:

Acts 6:9–10 Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen. But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.

Godly wisdom helps us to [evangelize](#) (proclaim the Gospel to others) and to be apologists (defenders of the Gospel), as he did with Stephan. We are all called to do this as part of the great commission. (See [Matthew 28:16–20](#) and [Mark 16:15–20](#)).

As we saw previously, human wisdom is self-centered, but godly wisdom considers the needs of others:

Philippians 2:3–4 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

3.3 The Importance of Godly Wisdom

The Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament has a great deal to say about wisdom, and here ‘wisdom’ is often referred to with feminine pronouns such as ‘herself’, or in the first person using ‘I’ or ‘me’. Godly wisdom is vitally important—our lives depend on it:

Proverbs 4:10–13 Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many. I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble. Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.

Proverbs 8:32–36 “Now then, my children, listen to me; blessed are those who keep my ways. Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not disregard it. Blessed are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. For those who find me find life and receive favor from the LORD. But those who fail to find me harm themselves; all who hate me love death.”

Proverbs 28:26 *Those who trust in themselves are fools, but those who walk in wisdom are kept safe.*

3.4 The Value of Godly Wisdom

Godly wisdom is more valuable than anything else on Earth:

Proverbs 3:7–8 *Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.*

Proverbs 3:13–18 *Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her those who hold her fast will be blessed.*

Proverbs 4:5–9 *Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or turn away from them. Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. Cherish her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. She will give you a garland to grace your head and present you with a glorious crown.”*

Proverbs 9:10–12 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For through wisdom your days will be many, and years will be added to your life. If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer.*

Proverbs 16:16 *How much better to get wisdom than gold, to get insight rather than silver!*

Proverbs 22:17–21 [Saying 1:] *Pay attention and turn your ear to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach, for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips. So that your trust may be in the LORD, I teach you today, even you. Have I not written thirty² sayings for you, sayings of counsel and knowledge, teaching you to be honest and to speak the truth, so that you bring back truthful reports to those you serve?*

Wisdom is practical, she seeks the truth, gets the facts, hears both sides before making a decision:

Proverbs 18:13 *To answer before listening—that is folly and shame.*

Proverbs 18:17 *In a lawsuit the first to speak seems right, until someone comes forward and cross-examines.*

The greatest people of the Old Testament, e.g., Moses, David, and Solomon, all had wisdom. Their Godly wisdom and the will of God are what made them great leaders.

² The 30 sayings are spread out through Proverbs chapters 22–24. They are explicitly called out in the NIV and some other translations, but not all translations do this.

3.5 The Wisdom of Jesus

The Bible tells us Jesus would and did have great wisdom, which makes sense since he is God:

Isaiah 11:2–4 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

And after Jesus was born into our physical world:

Luke 2:40 And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

Luke 2:52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

Matthew 13:54 Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. “Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” they asked.

1 Corinthians 1:22–24 Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Colossians 2:2–3 My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Jesus had great wisdom, and among other things he is a role model for us. Therefore since we are to be like Jesus we should strive to attain godly wisdom like his as well.

Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

4 Acquiring Godly Wisdom

Hopefully you now have an idea of how important Godly wisdom is, especially to Christians. We cannot buy Godly wisdom, but there are means to attain it, which will shall consider in these next sections.

No person can never attain godly wisdom on their own. Even with a multitude of years behind us we cannot learn godly wisdom. So as Job asked, where can this wisdom be found?

Job 28:12–13 But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell? No mortal comprehends its worth; it cannot be found in the land of the living.

Ephesians 1:17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

The world sees Christian belief as foolish but it is the world that is foolish, for they do not know God. The world's wisdom leads to emptiness and despair. The natural person, in his arrogance, does not seek out God's wisdom.

God sent his Son to save the world and reveal the mystery of God's plan. We can know God through Jesus Christ:

Romans 16:25–27 Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith—to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

God's wisdom is a free gift available to anyone, all we must do is humble ourselves and have faith. One method to attain Godly wisdom is to simply ask God for it, but we must ask in faith:

James 1:5–8 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

Speaking of faith, our hearts should be fully committed to God; we must be “all in”, trusting God completely and devoting ourselves to Him completely.

2 Chronicles 16:9a For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

Proverbs 2:1–11 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding—indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.

Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.

Next let's look at other ways to acquire this wisdom in our lives.

4.1 The Fear of the Lord

Proverbs 1:27–29 . . . *when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you. “Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me, since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD.*

Proverbs 8:13 *To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.*

Proverbs 16:6 *Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the LORD evil is avoided.*

The phrase “fear of the Lord” occurs 100+ times in the Bible, although this varies depending upon which translation you are reading. We have already seen the phrase “fear of the Lord” in some of the previous Bible passages. As you read the books of Psalms and Proverbs, you find that the fear of the Lord contains some of the Bible’s greatest blessings.

What does it mean to fear the Lord? For Christians, it is not a fear of punishment; rather the fear of the Lord contains elements of *fear, awe, reverence, and respect*. It is about our attitude towards God; we should embrace these elements as we begin to grasp God’s infinite knowledge, wisdom, greatness, power, and holiness.

Job 28:12–28 *But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell? No mortal comprehends its worth; it cannot be found in the land of the living. The deep says, “It is not in me”; the sea says, “It is not with me.” It cannot be bought with the finest gold, nor can its price be weighed out in silver. It cannot be bought with the gold of Ophir, with precious onyx or lapis lazuli. Neither gold nor crystal can compare with it, nor can it be had for jewels of gold. Coral and jasper are not worthy of mention; the price of wisdom is beyond rubies. The topaz of Cush cannot compare with it; it cannot be bought with pure gold.*

Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell? It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds in the sky. Destruction and Death say, “Only a rumor of it has reached our ears.” God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells, for he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. When he established the force of the wind and measured out the waters, when he made a decree for the rain and a path for the thunderstorm, then he looked at wisdom and appraised it; he confirmed it and tested it. And he said to the human race, “The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.”

Psalms 25:12 *Who, then, are those who fear the Lord? He will instruct them in the ways they should choose.*

Psalms 34:11 *Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.*

Proverbs 23:17 *Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the LORD.*

Those previous verses tell us that the fear of the Lord must be taught to us; it is not some innate ability that we have. Moreover we must be zealous for the fear of the Lord; in order to be taught it, we must earnestly desire it.

The fear of the Lord not only provides us with wisdom, but it is to keep us from sinning as well:

Exodus 20:20 *Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.”*

The fear of the Lord will give us longer lives:

Proverbs 10:27 *The fear of the LORD adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short.*

Finally, the scripture tells us that the fear of the Lord will provide us with all our needs:

Psalms 34:9 (NLT) *Fear the Lord, you his godly people, for those who fear him will have all they need.*

Psalms 128:1–4 *Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in obedience to him. You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Yes, this will be the blessing for the man who fears the Lord.*

Proverbs 19:23 (ESV) *The fear of the Lord leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm.*

What wonderful promises, that one who fears the Lord will have life, satisfaction, and not be visited by harm.³

4.2 Humility

Proverbs 11:2 *When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.*

Proverbs 22:4 *Humility is the fear of the LORD; its wages are riches and honor and life.*

Proverbs 26:12 *Do you see a person wise in their own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for them.*

Romans 12:3 *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.*

1 Corinthians 3:18 *Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become “fools” so that you may become wise.*

Galatians 6:3 *If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves.*

³ Some translations “...not be visited by evil.”

Most of us think we are smarter than we really are;⁴ only a truly humble person is aware of his limitations. Studies have shown that we can't multi-task as well as we think we can.⁵ We get into trouble when we don't know what we don't know. We usually try to solve our own problems and only approach God when a problem seems insurmountable.

Go to
God
first,
not last.

“When we have a problem, we always try to come up with our own solution; but we need to get into the habit of always asking God for His solution first.” — Derek Prince

God loves us and would be happy to help us with our day to day problems and decisions. In fact, the Old Testament teaches us that it angers God when we don't consult with Him:

2 Chronicles 18:4 *But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, “First seek the counsel of the LORD.”*

Isaiah 31:1 *Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD!*

Zephaniah 1:4–6 *“I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all who live in Jerusalem. I will destroy every remnant of Baal worship in this place, the very names of the idolatrous priests—those who bow down on the roofs to worship the starry host, those who bow down and swear by the LORD and who also swear by Molek, those who turn back from following the LORD and neither seek the LORD nor inquire of him.”*

Remember that pride is the root of all sin; it caused the devil to be cast down from heaven⁶ and it caused Adam and Eve to sin. Pride sets us up to be deceived by the devil. Rid yourselves of pride and humble yourselves; begin to ask God for help with your problems and you will find that He is faithful to those who obey him.

Humility is not a feeling, and it is much more than an attitude. Humility is a decision and something that we must cultivate in our hearts so that it permeates our entire demeanor. Humility makes us *teachable*, without which we cannot learn wisdom. Notice that scripture says we must humble ourselves; it is something we are commanded to do:

James 4:10 *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

1 Peter 5:6–7 *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

Do not confuse humility with low self-esteem, they are apples and oranges. See my related teaching entitled *Pride and Humility*.

⁴ For example: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunning%E2%80%93Kruger_effect

⁵ <https://tinyurl.com/2wv23hss>

⁶ See my teaching entitled *Know Your Enemy*

As with all God's blessings, such as wisdom, mercy, grace, etc., the key to receiving these blessings is by having humility, submission, obedience, and trust towards God. A Christian should never have any sense of entitlement, none of that "take it by faith" or "name it and claim it" garbage; all that we are and all that we have comes from God's mercy and grace; we do not deserve anything from God except eternal damnation. Thank God daily for all he has done for you. Daily prayer is also a good source of wisdom, see my teaching entitled [Prayer](#) for more information.

Godly wisdom sometimes requires that we accept certain truths without necessarily understanding them; e.g., Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, etc. We must remember that God's ways are inscrutable.

Romans 11:33–34 *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"*

Proverbs 3:5–6 *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

4.3 The Word of God

One of the single greatest sources of wisdom which is readily available to most of us is the [Holy Bible](#).⁷ Reading scripture on a regular basis is critical to acquiring and retaining Godly wisdom; it is like a muscle that grows stronger with regular use. Find the wisdom in what God taught the people of Israel in the Old Testament; and in the New Testament, learn to understand the wisdom in Jesus' teachings and parables, plus the wisdom in the letters written by the Apostles.

There are 31 chapters in the Book of Proverbs, a book devoted to teaching us wisdom. I've heard that the late Billy Graham used to read one chapter from Proverbs every day, depending on the day of the month. What an easy way to get started and keep track of which chapter to read. Billy Graham also used to read a Psalm everyday plus his own regular scripture readings. The average person can read through the entire Bible within a year; if that's too much, at least read through the New Testament as well the [Psalms](#) and [Proverbs](#).

Proverbs 4:13 *Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.*

For us to "hold on to instruction", we must read from scripture every day to the extent possible; we must repeatedly refill ourselves with God's instructions so that we walk in His ways throughout each day and don't become complacent. Everyday we are bombarded by worldliness and reading scripture is the way to counter the world, the devil, and our flesh.

This next verse tells us not to waste time but rather to make good use of our limited time here on Earth; for by doing so we will gain wisdom:

Psalms 90:12 *Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*

⁷ See my teaching entitled [The Holy Bible](#).

For more information, check out my teaching series on the Bible: [The Holy Bible](#), [Choosing a Bible](#), [Why Read the Bible?](#), and [How to Read Your Bible](#).

Psalms 119:66 *Teach me knowledge and good judgment, for I trust your commands.*

4.4 The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Colossians 1:9 *For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives...*

The Holy Spirit is called the *The Spirit of Wisdom* among other things.

Deuteronomy 34:9 *Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the Spirit of Wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD had commanded Moses.*

Be certain that you have received the [baptism of the Holy Spirit](#) without which no one is a Christian:

Romans 8:9 *You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.*

Pastors have said that most self-described Christians today lack [repentance](#) and/or the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and I have found this to be true. Some church goers are either genuine seekers looking for the connection to Christ, or [false believers](#)⁸ who do not understand scripture and who are not connected to the vine, which is Christ Jesus.

John 15:1–6 *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.*

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

Colossians 2:19 *They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.*

How can you receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Ask the Father:

Luke 11:11–13 *“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then,*

⁸ [Matthew 7:21–23](#), [Galatians 2:4](#)

though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!?

Allow yourself to be led by the Holy Spirit, for that is wisdom. Let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit and do not follow your emotions, which is usually unwise.

Galatians 5:17 (CEV) *The Spirit and your desires are enemies of each other. They are always fighting each other and keeping you from doing what you feel you should.*

In Christians, our spirit will always be at war with our flesh; this is unavoidable. However we can take comfort that one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is self-control:

Galatians 5:22–23 (ESV) *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

We should cultivate the fruit of the Spirit.

4.5 Asking Others

Despite the shortcomings of human wisdom (section [3.1 on page 3](#)), the Bible does tell us to seek advice from others:

Proverbs 11:14 *For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers.*

Proverbs 12:15 *The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.*

Proverbs 15:22 *Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.*

Proverbs 20:18 *Plans are established by seeking advice; so if you wage war, obtain guidance.*

Proverbs 24:6 *Surely you need guidance to wage war, and victory is won through many advisers.*

If we seek advice from others, we must be careful to check if their advice goes against biblical teachings. For example, I can't count how many times I've heard someone ask for advice such as "Should I take this job?" or "Should I date that person?" Invariably another "Christian" will give this advice: "Follow your heart". We know from [Jeremiah 17:9](#) that the "heart is deceitful above all else", so telling someone to follow their heart is bad advice since it contradicts scripture.

Who then are good people to seek advice from?

- Spiritually mature persons, such as pastors, ministers, or elders;
- Elderly people, who having lived a long life hopefully accumulated wisdom for themselves; e.g., grandparents;
- Subject matter experts such as teachers, professors, doctors, etc.

Learn to filter out bad advice from politicians, pundits, celebrities, etc. or anyone who promotes or embraces hatred and divisiveness, as these are not Christian

values, but are the work of the devil. Remember that everyone has opinions, but they are often times wrong. Exercise careful discernment with advice found on social media.

Unfortunately teens and young adults tend to ask their peers, who frequently give terrible advice. Do not be like king Rehoboam who did not follow the advice of his elders. . .

1 Kings 12:6–14 (NLT) *Then King Rehoboam discussed the matter with the older men who had counseled his father, Solomon. “What is your advice?” he asked. “How should I answer these people?” The older counselors replied, “If you are willing to be a servant to these people today and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your loyal subjects.”*

But Rehoboam rejected the advice of the older men and instead asked the opinion of the young men who had grown up with him and were now his advisers. “What is your advice?” he asked them. “How should I answer these people who want me to lighten the burdens imposed by my father?” The young men replied, “This is what you should tell those complainers who want a lighter burden: ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s waist! Yes, my father laid heavy burdens on you, but I’m going to make them even heavier! My father beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions!’ ”

Three days later Jeroboam and all the people returned to hear Rehoboam’s decision, just as the king had ordered. But Rehoboam spoke harshly to the people, for he rejected the advice of the older counselors and followed the counsel of his younger advisers. He told the people, “My father laid heavy burdens on you, but I’m going to make them even heavier! My father beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions!”

Needless to say, things did not go well for Rehoboam, but if you read [1 Kings 11:1–12:33](#), things turned out the way did because it was God’s will. The Bible is full of wisdom and life lessons, making it well worth your time to read it.

Just as we take care of our bodies by being careful what we eat, we must also be careful what we feed our brains so that our minds do not become polluted by the world.

James 1:27 *Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*

This is especially problematic in the present day since we are now bombarded with various media, which is often full false information. Do not listen to right-wing media, which is the devil’s megaphone. Do not listen to left-wing media either. The bygone era of newsmen like Edward R. Murrow and Walter Cronkite (who was called the most trusted man in America) among others were known for their objective reporting of the news. News is the objective stating of facts, however as soon as someone interjects their opinion it is no longer news. Learn to discern when people are stating facts and when they are editorializing or even lying.

Philippians 1:9–11 *And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit*

of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Colossians 2:8 *See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.*

4.6 Mistakes

There have been difficult times in my life during which I have made a lot of mistakes. Or perhaps more likely, there are times when I made a lot of mistakes and these caused difficult times in my life. These were times in which I seemed to have learned the most.

“From the errors of others, a wise man corrects his own.”

-Publius Syrus

Acknowledge your own mistakes so that you learn from them and do not repeat them. If you do not learn the lesson the first time, God may teach you with a harsher lesson the next time.

Proverbs 19:20 *Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise.*

Not only is it wise to learn from your own mistakes, there is even greater wisdom in learning from the mistakes of others. The Bible is filled with examples of people showing us what not to do, especially in the Old Testament, so that we can learn from their mistakes:

1 Corinthians 10:6 *Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.*

1 Corinthians 10:11 *These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come.*

Hebrews 4:11 *Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.*

Jude 1:7 *In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.*

Look around at people in the world today and see what mistakes we can learn from them. Do not become puffed up, nor look down on these people or mock them, but instead remember that you are no better than anyone else. Whatever wisdom or goodness you may have comes from the grace of God.

“The greatest teacher, failure is.” — Yoda, The Last Jedi

4.7 Our Conscience

Our conscience is separate from the rest of ourself, something God puts into us. We can go against our conscience, but we cannot manipulate our consciences. Our conscience is an independent witness, and Paul is saying even his conscience confirms what he is saying (see below), therefore Paul is being very truthful and very sincere and solemn in what he is saying.

Acts 24:16 *So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.*

1 Corinthians 4:4 *My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.*

2 Corinthians 1:12 *Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace.*

Our conscience usually starts out looking after our own interests—from a young age we learn to say “Mine!”, because our consciences lack training; the conscience needs to be enlightened with Godly wisdom. It needs to be taught, it needs to be trained, it needs to be educated. Our conscience needs to be saturated with daily Scripture reading. Repeated sin can cause our conscience to unlearn good behavior and become numb to repeated sins. We must be careful to listen to a godly well-trained conscience and never act against it.

Exodus 14:31 *And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.*

As one continues reading the rest of the history of the Israelites, you will see that they had a short memory; they repeatedly back-slid in that they no longer trusted in God nor feared him, for they complained incessantly to God and committed other sins, thus stirring up God's wrath against themselves.

So we too have short memories, we forget the lessons we have learned and must relearn them. Keeping a journal of your life lessons can be helpful in this respect. Even history repeats itself as our societies make the same mistakes again and again. There is wisdom then, if we remember all of our past mistakes and the consequences so we do not repeat them.

Ephesians 5:15–17 *Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.*

5 Application

We must let Godly wisdom must take precedence over our human wisdom. We must never ever let our human wisdom supplant godly wisdom. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes.

Proverbs 16:21 *The wise in heart are called discerning, and gracious words promote instruction.*

We need not look far to see the results of human wisdom, which, along with sin, are the cause of most of the world's problems. We argue and fight amongst ourselves instead of our common enemy—the devil and his demons:

Ephesians 6:12 (NLT) *For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.*

Oh how much better the world could be if we were all filled with God's wisdom, united in Christ, united in love, and free of sin!

Most people can't see the forest for the trees. Always strive to see the big picture, try to look at life from God's perspective. Perhaps you've heard the expression "Think globally, act locally", which tells us how to protect God's creation through good stewardship. Likewise, think eternally, act temporally. Knowing as a Christian that you will live for all eternity, your time here in the present day Earth will pass like the blink of an eye. Consider your life on this Earth to be a classroom and change your perspective accordingly.

Romans 12:2 *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Make it one of your life's ambition to pursue God's wisdom. Humble yourself and open your mind to God's teaching and wisdom. Request the baptism of the Holy Spirit if you are lacking this. Be sure to take time each day for prayer and the reading of scripture, as these will not only add to your wisdom but also help you to grow into the image of Christ Jesus. Request wisdom from God as we saw in [James 1:5](#).

Remember that knowledge alone is not sufficient; in fact the Apostle Paul warns us that knowledge "puffs up" in [1 Corinthians 8:1–2](#). Rather than becoming conceited with your knowledge, seek God's counseling and God's will to guide you in the application of the knowledge God has given you. Finally:

1 Corinthians 16:14 *Do everything in love.*

Godly wisdom combined with love makes for a most powerful combination to make you an effective servant of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Proverbs 8:22–31 *"The LORD brought me [wisdom] forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; I was formed long ages ago, at the very beginning, when the world came to be. When there were no watery depths, I was given birth, when there were no springs overflowing with water; before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth, before he made the world or its fields or any of the dust of the earth.*

I was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command, and when he marked out the foundations of the earth. Then I was constantly at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind.

6 Prayer

“Heavenly Father, you created wisdom first, before all creation, so that the universe could be created in wisdom. Remind me to live in humility. Please baptize me with your Holy Spirit if you have not already do so. I thank you for the knowledge and wisdom you have given me, and ask that you instill more wisdom in me where I am lacking. Please give me discernment to filter human wisdom appropriately and to apply your godly wisdom first and foremost. Help me to grow in wisdom and in the image of your Son, Jesus Christ, so that I can serve you more effectively in your kingdom on Earth. May your wisdom, power, and glory be made manifest to all mankind. Amen.”

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