

True Wisdom

WHERE DOES TRUE WISDOM COME FROM?

Focal Verses • PROVERBS 1:1-9

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will **RECOGNIZE** the value of godly wisdom and direction, **VALUE** godly wisdom in our choices, and **APPLY** the standards of wisdom to a specific choice that needs to be made.

In Focus

Nikki kept clicking back and forth between the websites for her top college picks. Grandma Jean could see Nikki was getting frustrated. “What’s the matter, sweetie?”

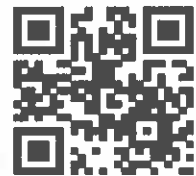
“I still can’t decide which college I want to go to.” Nikki showed her grandmother the pictures of both colleges, with their sunny campuses, happy graduates, and winning athletes. “They’re both offering substantial financial aid. Both have active on-campus ministries. Both have the program I want. I can’t decide; they both look so good.” Jean never had to make this decision herself, but always wished she had the opportunity. She often volunteered at a local Christian charity that offered tutoring and college admission guidance. “I’m glad to know you’ve already considered the finances, and how you’ll stay plugged in at church. What did you think of the campuses?”

Nikki sighed. “I haven’t gotten to visit either of them. They’re out of state, and we could hardly afford the hotels, much less the airfare.”

“Well, you can’t trust the college’s website to show you what the school is really like. Contact a student who goes there now. Have you asked the colleges if they can help pay for you to come visit them? Some colleges do that, you know. Some charities too. I might even have some pull at a certain local charity...” Jean said, winking at Nikki.

Why is it important to seek wise counsel before making major decisions?

SCAN FOR VIDEO



Keep in Mind

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge:
but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7, KJV).

Focal Verses

KJV **Proverbs 1:1** The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;

2 To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;

3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;

4 To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.

5 A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:

6 To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.

7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:

9 For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.

The People, Places, and Times

Wisdom Literature. The books of the Bible that are considered wisdom literature are Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. Sometimes, some of the Psalms, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations receive this label, too. This is a modern way to describe a genre of literature from the ancient Near East, which was plentiful in Egypt and Mesopotamian cultures as well. Sometimes, wisdom literature directly presents adages or wise sayings (like Proverbs). Other pieces in the genre ponder a deep question over the course of many conversations and situations (like Job). These books present challenges in understanding them, as they ask questions that seem to contradict themselves with doubts, quite unlike the prophetic and narrative books. From this, however, we can learn that God is unafraid of our questions. He welcomes our honesty. Biblical wisdom literature asks questions and assures us that God has the answers. We just need to trust Him.

The Book of Proverbs. Known as a book of wisdom, Proverbs is like a father sitting down with a young son to pass on valuable lessons learned after a lifetime of trials and errors. It is a collection of wise sayings primarily written by King Solomon, referred to as having wisdom

that “excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt” (1 Kings 4:30). Other contributors are Agur (chapter 30) and Lemuel (31:1–9). Although somewhat sporadic in its arrangement of topics, Proverbs’ clear purpose and theme are provided in the first seven verses: to teach wisdom and prepare its readers for living godly lives in the fear of the Lord. Wisdom is imagined as a woman throughout the book. Life is unpredictable, and at any moment, one may need advice about anything from family life to business decisions. Proverbs provides wisdom for these and more, particularly as it pertains to one’s relationship with God and others.

Background

The purpose of the book of Proverbs is summed up in chapter 1 verse 2 (KJV): “To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding.” In other words, Proverbs aims to teach the readers wisdom so that they will allow wisdom to govern their lives. Applying wisdom to one’s life means approaching all of life’s situations and challenges from God’s point of view, thinking, and living according to His will and truth. That is why “the fear of the LORD

is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7, KJV). Therefore, possessing wisdom is related to one’s relationship with God. Reverence and awe toward God is the essential prelude to all wisdom and successful living. Wisdom is one of God’s divine attributes. God, in His grace, must reveal it if we truly grasp it. Wisdom takes insights gained from our knowledge of God’s truth and applies them to our daily lives.

If we have wisdom, it will lead to godly living. God wants us to be fair and righteous. The foolish do not act by God’s Word and reject all instructions. They are self-reliant and prideful. Their only hope is to answer wisdom’s call to listen and obey, resulting in safety and peace. The alternative is to be destroyed by acting wayward and self-righteous (1:32–33). The results of seeking wisdom present a clear contrast with living a life of foolishness.

The Book of Proverbs, which is classified among the Wisdom Books of the Old Testament, is a collection of proverbial sayings. It is a collection of sayings from different authors over time and finally collected into a single book. Solomon wrote many of the sayings but also collected 3,000 proverbs (1 Kings 4:29–34). Some proverbs in this book were written by Agur and Lemuel, who are otherwise unknown. Many scholars agree that the book is an anthology comprised of seven discrete units (1–9; 10:1–22:16; 22:17–24:22; 24:23–24:34; 25–29; 30; 31). Chapters 1 through 9 are considered wisdom for young people. But all people can learn from the wisdom shared.

How did Solomon use godly wisdom as king?

At-A-Glance

1. Wisdom for Godly Living (Proverbs 1:1–6)
2. Foundations for Wisdom (1:7–9)

In Depth

1. Wisdom for Godly Living (Proverbs 1:1–6)

Solomon is identified as the author. The student (son) is addressed by a teacher (father) (vv. 2–3). He is being told how to get wisdom for godly living, which will lead to appropriate actions. God wants us to be righteous, just, and fair. The teacher is the one who provides the student with the guidance and sound advice necessary because they may lack proper judgment (v. 4).

The theme of the book of Proverbs is contained in verse 7. We are wise if we have a “fear of the LORD,” which is awe, reverence, and respect for God. True wisdom comes from God. We need to have a relationship with God and obey His Word. The Word gives us a revelation about who God is and His requirements for living as faithful believers.

Those who will not pursue wisdom are called “fools” who “despise wisdom and instruction” because they think they know everything and do not need God. Fools cannot distinguish between good and evil or right and wrong. People who are arrogant and self-sufficient will reject the need to depend on God or anyone else. It is very hard to convince them otherwise. They do not understand that God is the source of all wisdom and has given them the ability to succeed.

2. Foundations for Wisdom (Proverbs 1:7–9)

Families are the foundation on which children should learn about loving and honoring God. Parents have to set an example. The instructions are a warning from the father to his son about listening to instructions given by his parents and not being enticed by sin. Sin often looks and feels good. However, it is only a temporary feeling that will leave us empty.

How can parents instruct and demonstrate to their children a “fear of the Lord?”

Search the Scriptures

1. What is the purpose of the Proverbs (Proverbs 1:2–3)?
2. What is “the beginning of knowledge” (v. 7)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. Discuss the difference between knowledge and wisdom. Are both important?
2. When making major decisions, it is good to seek wise counseling. Whom do you trust to give you wise counsel?
3. How has their advice impacted your life?
4. When contemplating an important decision, how can one know whether the choice is God’s will or one’s flesh?

Liberating Lesson

Life is full of choices. Every day, we choose whether to go to work, what to do at work, what to eat, who to talk to, how to comb our hair, what clothes to put on, when to go to bed, and so on. Hundreds of choices are made with little thought. But life often gives us difficult decisions that need to be made.

When we witness injustices in our communities, we can either turn the other way or stop and intervene. If we intervene, there may be consequences that affect us and our family. How can we use godly wisdom while trying to help others be treated fairly? It is a challenging answer. Perhaps join or organize protest groups, march, create online petitions, and learn other nonviolent techniques. We can no longer sit in the churches and ignore the social, religious, and civil injustices that are manifesting themselves in our communities. It is time to decide how to help our neighbors, regardless of race, religion, or nationality. What is God calling you to do? Seek wise counseling before acting and trust God for the outcome.

Application for Activation

When we have to make life-altering decisions, the burden can make us feel inadequate in understanding what to do. We need to seek to evaluate life situations in light of God’s character and purposes and make decisions based on divine wisdom. We must rely on something other than foolish people to help us. They will lead us astray, and our situation will end in calamity.

Whatever choices must be made, we can rely on God for help. We should consciously apply godly standards of wisdom to the choice that needs to be made. We need to read the Word, pray, talk to other Christians who have shared experiences, pray some more, and then act by what the Holy Spirit guides us to do. If we obey the Spirit, we will have the benefit of peace.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Sources:

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Say It Correctly

Proverbial. pro-**VERB**-ee-al.
Subtlety. **SUH**-till-tee.
Naïve. nie-**EVE**.

Daily Bible Readings

DAY 99

1 Kings 15–1
Psalm 40:9–13

DAY 100

1 Kings 18–20
Psalm 40:14–17

DAY 101

1 Kings 21–22
Psalm 41:1–6

DAY 102

2 Kings 1–5
Psalm 41:7–13

DAY 103

2 Kings 6–11
Psalm 42:1–7

DAY 104

2 Kings 12–14
Psalm 42:8–11

DAY 105

2 Kings 15–17
Psalm 43

Notes
