



Ministry of Biblical Studies

JUNE BIBLE STUDY SERIES

"The Words of the Wise: The Beginning of Wisdom"

June 12, 2024



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**Welcome to the Metropolitan Community Church
Ministry of Biblical Study Classes
June 12, 2024**

“The Words of the Wise: The Beginning of Wisdom”

IN PERSON MBS RESUMES

“Wisdom” here is defined as a religious experience. It is related to the fear of the Lord. This important concept of the Hebrew religion is key to Proverbs. Not only does it occur repeatedly, but it also frames the entire book (Prov. 1:7, 31:30).

The fear of the Lord has nothing to do with the superstitious and childish fear of divine punishment. Instead, it should be understood as the acute consciousness of God’s personal presence at all times and everywhere. The fear of the Lord had characterized the people’s reaction to God’s revelation at Sinai (Exod. 19:16, Exod. 20:20), just as it explained their commitment to be faithful and to love God in response to His covenant with them (Deut. 10:12).

In short, to fear God means to be faithful to God and to love Him. The phrase “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of . . . wisdom” means that wisdom originates in this “fear.” The Hebrew word for “beginning” points to the first word introducing the Creation story (Gen. 1:1). The first lesson of wisdom, then, deals with understanding that God is our Creator, the One who gives us life and breath, and that He is always present — a God of love, and justice, and redemption (John 3:16, Ps. 89:14, Heb. 9:12).

We are told to love God and also to fear Him. How do these two concepts relate to your own experience with the Lord?

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

What is wisdom and how do we receive it? Throughout antiquity, these have been the eternal questions on the lips of mankind. Adam and Eve were confronted with this question as they tried to resist the forbidden fruit. Israelite kings pleaded with God for wisdom during their reigns and Jesus proclaimed the answer as He climbed the mountain at Calvary.

All the people of the Bible needed knowledge and wisdom. There was no regard for stations in life. Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." As one continues to read, they will come across Proverbs 9:10 which states "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Knowledge of the Lord through His word is the only way to gain wisdom. But where does fear enter into the equation?

God's Holy Word gives us the book of Proverbs to answer these questions. This book is filled with beautiful words of instruction that lead to obtaining wisdom in every area of one's life. If there is a question, Proverbs has the answer.

What Is "The Fear of the Lord"

The words "**fear the Lord**" are probably three of the most misunderstood words. Our human minds go straight to the thought that the Lord is one to be scared of. We should watch our steps and hold our tongues because this "lord" will hurt us if we don't. How far this is from the truth.

In the American Commentary on the Old Testament, George R. Berry writes that "the fear of the Lord is not a philosophy or speculation. It has to include a religious element." The fear spoken of in these verses are relating to respect. Respect of the Lord means His followers are being aware of what is right and wrong and making a conscious effort to avoid evil. As believers, we want to obey and be pleasing in His sight. In the words of Charles Bridges, "the fear of the Lord is that affectionate reverence, by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father's law."

How Does the Fear of the Lord Lead to Knowledge?

Knowledge is the facts, skills, and information one achieves through experience or education. Everyone has knowledge in certain areas. Just like a farmer has knowledge of the land, believers need knowledge of the Lord. To obtain this knowledge, we must be taught. Our teacher is the Lord. He teaches through His Word and Holy Spirit.

To fear the Lord leads us to respect Him and His laws. We learn how we are to act and even what we should say by fearing the Lord. This fear, or reverence, makes us think before we act or speak. As we gain knowledge, we gain wisdom. In the words of Bruce K. Waltke, "knowledge is inseparable from wisdom." Waltke goes on to write in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* that to have wisdom means there is an "internalization of spiritual knowledge." To have fear of the Lord is to have knowledge. How could one not fear the Lord when He begins to show them wisdom?

The Process of Gaining Wisdom

Three points stand out in verse 10. The first, is of course, fear. We see God as a father who wants his children to learn, grow, and apply these truths to every aspect of their lives. Secondly, we find conviction. When we have been going down the wrong path, we place a wedge between ourselves and the Father. Conviction opens our eyes to our current situation. It is a chance to turn away and begin anew on the right path. Lastly, we see repentance. Repentance is the turning away from sin. If we have a healthy dread of the consequences, then we are more likely to repent. This is the beginning of true wisdom.

Believers should fear the consequences of the heavenly Father, therefore leading them to make wise decisions in day-to-day tasks as well as the "big" decisions of life.

To enter onto the right path, we must forsake the wrong path. Without the fear of consequence, one cannot get to a right place with God.

