

Wisdom and Discernment

- 24 Now therefore, my son,
And pay attention to
25 Do not let your heart
Do not stray into her paths.
26 For many are the ¹victims she has cast down,
And ^anumerous are all her slain.
27 Her ^ahouse is the way to Sheol,
Descending to the chambers of death.

CHAPTER 8

- DOES not ^awisdom call,
And understanding ¹lift up her voice?
2 On top of ^athe heights beside the way,
Where the paths meet, she takes her stand;
3 Beside the ^agates, at the opening to the city,
At the entrance of the doors, she cries out:
4 "To you, O men, I call,
And my voice is to the sons of men.
5 "O ^{1a}naive ones, discern ²prudence;
And, O ^bfools, discern ²wisdom.
6 "Listen, for I shall speak ^anoble things;
And the opening of my lips will produce ^bbright things.
7 "For my ^amouth will utter truth;
And wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
8 "All the utterances of my mouth are in righteousness;
There is nothing ^acrooked or perverted in them.
9 "They are all ^astraightforward to him who understands,
And right to those who ^bfind knowledge.
10 "Take my ^ainstruction, and not silver,
And knowledge rather than choicest gold.

2 *Prov. 8:1, 18

3 *Prov. 8:1, 18

4 *Ps. 110:1, 11; Prov. 1:22, 32; 3:35

5 *Prov. 22:30; 1 *Prov. 23:16

6 *Ps. 37:30; John 8:14; Rom. 13:8

7 *Deut. 32:5; Prov. 2:15; Phil. 2:15

8 *Prov. 14:6; 1 *Prov. 3:13

9 *Prov. 3:14, 15; 8:19

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INTRODUCTION

There is a moment in every believer's journey when the accumulation of facts stops being enough. You have read the Bible, attended the services, taken the notes — and yet something is still missing. That missing piece, more often than not, is wisdom.

This is not a book of easy answers. It is an invitation to think — deeply, honestly and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit — about what it truly means to walk wisely in a world that grows more complex and noisier by the day. We will explore the three inseparable companions: Wisdom, Understanding and Knowledge. Separately, each has value; together, they form the foundation of a life well-lived.

You will find in these pages both the ancient and the practical. We will dig into Hebrew and Greek roots, sit with the Scriptures, and then bring it all home to Monday morning — to the decisions you face at work, in your relationships, and in your walk with God. Because truth out of context, or misapplied, is a perversion of the very thing it was meant to be.

We will also venture into territory that some find unfamiliar — the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Not as a theological debate, but as a living reality. The word of wisdom that cuts through confusion in a crisis. The discernment that protects a congregation from deception. The word of knowledge that stops a stranger in their tracks and reminds them that God sees them completely. These are not relics of another era; they are resources for right now, available to every willing believer.

Along the way, we will meet some remarkable people. Bezalel, the craftsman so filled with the Spirit of God that his hands could build what his eyes had never seen. Solomon, who was given the chance to ask for anything and chose wisdom above wealth and power. Daniel, who remained sharp and discerning in the most hostile of environments. Their stories are not simply history — they are a mirror, reflecting what is possible when a person commits to growing in wisdom rather than merely ageing into it.

Because that is the sobering truth at the heart of this book: wisdom does not come automatically with time. It is something we contend for. It is cultivated through study, through experience, through sitting with the wise, and through the humility to remain teachable long after we think we have learned enough. A fool, as Proverbs reminds us, is in love with his own opinion. Wisdom, by contrast, means staying open — to God, to correction, to the still small voice that speaks when we are quiet enough to hear it.

My prayer is that as you read, something in you awakens — not just a greater store of knowledge, but a genuine hunger for the wisdom that comes from above. The kind that is pure, peaceable, gentle and full of mercy. The kind that does not wound where it could redeem.

Come, and let us reason together.

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Wisdom, Understanding and Knowledge

When we talk about wisdom, we need to understand that there are three words that go together – *Wisdom, Understanding and Knowledge*. To be wise, we need Divine intervention, called the gift of discernment, but also knowledge, or academics and we definitely need understanding, or insight.

What seems to be lacking in the body of Christ is *critical thinking*, which is the ability to apply knowledge to different situations and contexts. Truth out of context, or misapplied, is a perversion. A person might be quoting the Scriptures, but may I remind you that Satan did the same, as he tried to tempt Jesus.

When we study the scriptures semantics matter, so does an accurate exegesis of the Word. Semantics is the study of the meaning of language and words, and exegesis is the critical, objective explanation or interpretation of a text, to understand what a text meant in its original context. Without context, we have a pretext, and therefore it is important to learn how to interpret the Bible accurately.

Let's begin with some definitions, so that we are clear on the meaning of the words, or concepts we are studying.

Definitions of Wisdom:

The Hebrew word for wisdom is *Chokmah* (pronounced "gogma"). It means:

- In good sense, skilful, wit
- Skilled in war
- Wisdom in administration
- Shrewdness
- Prudence in religious affairs
- Ethical and religious

The Miriam-Webster online dictionary defines it as:

- Accumulated philosophical/scientific learning: knowledge
- Ability to discern inner qualities and relationships: insight
- Good sense: judgment
- Generally accepted belief
- A wise attitude, belief, course of action

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Wisdom then implies *sense, reason* and *judgment* far above the average. We could call this common sense in modern language.

Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life John 6:68 (ESV)

In Proverbs 1: 33 we read Wisdom's Warning: "*But the one who always listens to me will live undisturbed in a heavenly peace. Free from fear, confident and courageous, you will rest unafraid and sheltered from the storms of life.*"

It is wise to choose obedience. Obedience to the Words of Jesus gives us heavenly peace, freedom from fear, confidence and courage, cause us to rest unafraid and shelters us from the storms of life.

We will still go through trials, but it will not crush us. We can have assurance that amid the storm we will find rest, peace and shelter.

Definition of Discernment:

The Greek word for discernment is **diakrises**. It means distinguishing,

discerning, and judging.

It's from the word **diakrino** which means:

- to separate, make distinction, discriminate, to prefer, to be partial
- to try, to decide, give judgment
- to withdraw from one, to desert
- to separate oneself in a hostile spirit, to oppose, strive with dispute, contend

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and from the root word **krino**, meaning:

- to decree, resolve, determine
- to judge – pronounce an opinion concerning right or wrong
- to rule, govern – preside over with the power of giving judicial decisions (prerogative of kings and rulers to pass judgment)
- to contend together, of warriors and combatants, to dispute, to go to law (bring a lawsuit)

Discernment is a mental exercise, as well as a spiritual gift. Because discerning implies that we must make judgement calls, we need to have knowledge of the subject we judge, as well as insight as to how the knowledge applies to the specific situation.

Let's consider some scriptures:

Revelation 1:6 says, "*He has made us kings and priests*". This establishes our position of authority and gives us mandate and the responsibility to judge certain things.

1 Peter 2:9 says we are a royal priesthood, and in 1 Corinthians we read that we will judge even angels.

Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! (1 Corinthians 6:3)

It is also wise to realise that sometimes, the battle belongs to the Lord.

Biblical Example:

A dispute broke out between Paul and Barnabas and some men who came down from Judea. They were teaching that unless men were circumcised according to Moses' laws, they could not be saved. After a heated debate, Paul, Barnabas and some of the men went to Jerusalem to speak to the apostles and the elders about this matter. After more debating, the apostle Paul concludes, as written in Acts 15:19, "*Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, **20** but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood.*"

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Definition of Knowledge:

The Hebrew word for knowledge is the word "daath", which means to be sensible by sight, by touch, but chiefly by mind.

Knowledge is the awareness, understanding, or familiarity with facts, information, skills, or concepts acquired through experience, study, or reasoning.

It's commonly broken into a few types:

- Propositional knowledge ("knowing that") — factual information, e.g. *knowing that Paris is the capital of France*
- Procedural knowledge ("knowing how") — practical skills, e.g. *knowing how to ride a bike*
- Acquaintance knowledge ("knowing of") — familiarity through direct experience, e.g. *knowing a person or place*

Knowledge is something we can acquire by studying, observing, or practicing a skill. These things can be taught or demonstrated by others or can be acquired without direct input through self-study.

Wisdom is something we contend for; it does not automatically come with age. It's time well spent, applying ourselves to the disciplines of studying and learning, and the application of the truths we uncover, that makes us wise.

Study and do your best to present yourself to God approved, a workman [tested by trial] who has no reason to be ashamed, accurately handling and skilfully teaching the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15 (AMP)

The Lord created us a spirit, with a soul and living in a body.

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 ESV

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The soul consist of emotions, will and mind. God always intended for us to use our minds to reason well, to think critically, to consider issues using our intellect.

Consider God's discussion with Job...Chapters 38 – 42

Then Job replied to the Lord: "I know that you can do all things;
no purpose of yours can be thwarted. **3** You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?'
Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. (Job 42:2,3)

And the prophet Isaiah's vision:

"Come now, **and let us reason together,**" Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. (Is. 1:18)

Another Biblical example is Bezalel, whom we read about in

Exodus 31:1 – 5

*Then the Lord said to Moses, **2** "See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, **3** and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills— **4** to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, **5** to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts*

It is wise to realise we don't know everything and that we need to be educated. As Christians we need to be people with teachable spirits and when we need wisdom, we should ask of the Lord, as we see in James 1: 5, which reads:

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him."

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers. It may not be difficult to store up in the mind a vast quantity of facts within a comparatively short time, but the ability to form judgments requires the severe discipline of hard work and the tempering heat of experience and maturity.

Calvin Coolidge

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Defining Understanding

The Hebrew word for understanding is "tebunah" which means to have insight, to discern, to have discretion, and to comprehend.

There is a comprehension strategy from a literacy education viewpoint called three-level thinking which can be applied here. It is also a demonstration of a critical thinking skill, which is to apply a literacy principle to a spiritual issue. The skill of applying knowledge or skills gained in one context to a new, different situation is called knowledge transfer, and it's a valuable skill to apply when reading the Word of God, provided you stay within the context. For example, if the Lord says not to steal because of greed, you know He means not to steal when you are hungry, even it's not explicitly stated, because stealing is wrong in every situation.

In case the reader is not familiar with The *Three Level Guide*, let me expand a little. It is a comprehension strategy which supports students to read the text closely by providing a clear purpose and direction for reading.

The three levels of statements, **literal**, **interpretive** and **applied**, guide the reader to focus on the **relevant information** and to **develop an informed opinion** on the issues explored in the text. The reader is encouraged to draw on their background knowledge of the topic and **to apply** the information from the text to real life contexts.

To put it in simple terms:

You read the "lines" to find the facts and actualities.

Then you read "between the lines" to discover what is implied, without being literally stated.

Finally, you read "beyond the lines" in order to find how what you are reading can be applied to your situation.

Can you see how this can apply to reading the Scriptures? It is wise to discern between what is said, what is implied and how to apply what we know to the situation.

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Discernment

Becoming aware/Divine download

Understanding Knowledge

Reason, grasp with the mind, insight Know the facts, engage the intellect

Wisdom

The ability to process, with the guidance and inspiration of Holy Spirit, what we discern; using knowledge and insight to apply God's truth to any given situation, in such a manner that we bring redemption without wounding.

Here are a few more scriptures to ponder:

My child, never drift off course from these two goals for your life: to walk in wisdom and to discover discernment*. Don't ever forget how they empower you. (Proverbs 3:21 TPT)

*The word discernment can also be translated as discretion, counsel, meditation and purpose

A fool is in love with his own opinion, but wisdom means being teachable. (Proverbs 12:15 TPT)

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice. (Proverbs 12:15 ESV)

In the book of Proverbs, chapter three we see a comprehensive list of the

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Blessings and rewards of Wisdom:

- A full and rewarding life, and peace (v2)
- Favour with both God and men, success (v4)
- Guidance in every situation (v5)
- Leading you on straight paths (v6)
- Healing and refreshment for your body (v8)
- Overflowing blessing in every dimension of your life (v10)
- Blessing (v13)
- Impartation of great treasure (v14)
- Long life, riches and honour (v16)
- Wealth and promotion (v16)
- Ways of pleasantness and peace (v17)
- Wisdom is a tree of life (v18)
- Life for your soul, and an adornment for your neck (v22)
- Security, to guide your feet (v23)
- Sweet sleep, without fear (v24)
- You won't be subjected to terror or ruin (v25)
- The Lord will be your confidence, and keep your feet from being caught

Wisdom pours into you when you begin to hate every form of evil in your life... (Proverbs 8:13a TPT)



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MORE THOUGHTS ON WISDOM

Wisdom has *built* her house; she has hewn her seven pillars. (Proverbs 9:1 ESV)

The word "build" and the word "son" comes from the same root word, *banah*, in Biblical Hebrew. Hebrew scholars have often noted the relationship between these words: a family is "built" through sons and descendants. This idea appears in passages such as Psalm 127 and Ruth 4, where a household or lineage is spoken of as being built.

The house Wisdom is building is a son - we are the sons of God, being built into a spiritual house.

The seven pillars points us to the seven days of creation, the seven spirits of God and the seven components of heavenly wisdom.

"17 But the wisdom from above is first pure [morally and spiritually undefiled], then **peace-loving** [courteous, considerate], **gentle, reasonable** [and willing to listen], **full of compassion** and **good fruits**. It is unwavering, **without** [self-righteous] **hypocrisy** [and self-serving guile]. **18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness** (spiritual maturity) **is sown in peace by those who make peace** [by actively encouraging goodwill between individuals]." (James 3:17, 18 AMP)

And the **Spirit of the Lord** will rest on Him—

The Spirit of **wisdom** and **understanding**,

The Spirit of **counsel** and **strength**,

The Spirit of **knowledge** and **of the [reverential and obedient] fear of the Lord**— (Isaiah 11:2 AMP)

James 3:18 reads: "And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace". Wisdom, like the fruit of the Spirit, is something that needs to be cultivated, over time, diligently, and with patience.

When we need wisdom, we seek God, we pray for divine revelation, knowledge and insight and we steward it well. We partner with the Lord – He does His part, and we apply ourselves to doing our part. According to Luke 2:52, even Jesus had to grow *"in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and all the people"*.

Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm Proverbs 13:20 ESV

The way of the guilty is crooked, but the conduct of the pure is upright. Proverbs 21:8 ESV

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CHARACTERS TO STUDY

Here are a few characters from the Scriptures that are noteworthy. May I encourage you to read the verses and learn from them.

Bezalel and Oholiab: Exodus 31:1 – 11; Exodus 35:30 – 35; Exodus 36:1, 2

Solomon: 1 Kings 3:5-28; 2 Chronicles 1:7-12; 1 Kings 4:29-34; 1 Kings 5:12

The Queen of Sheba: 1 Kings 10:4 – 9; 2 Chronicles 9:1 – 12

Daniel and his friends: Daniel 1:4; Daniel 5:11 – 14; Daniel 2:22

Jesus: Isaiah 11:1, 2

The apostle Paul: Ephesians 1: 15 – 23

The book of Proverbs also is a rich source of wisdom.



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A WORD OF CAUTION: THERE IS A DISTINCT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL WISDOM

"Who is a wise ("sophos" = "skill") man and endued with knowledge ("epistemon" = "understanding, intelligent"; to know how to do anything, to know well") among you? (KJV) Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom ("sophia"). But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure ("hagnos" = "clean, chaste"; "not contaminated, pure from every defilement"), then peaceable ("eirenikos" = "relating to peace, peaceful, disposed to peace; healthful, wholesome"), gentle ("epieikes" = "appropriate, mild, moderate, patient"), willing to yield ("easy to be entreated"; "eupeithes" = "easily persuaded"), full of mercy ("eleos" = "active compassion"), and good fruits without partiality ("adiakritos" = "not judging diversely, impartial") and without hypocrisy ("anupokritos" = "the practice of professing standards, beliefs, etc., contrary to one's real character or behaviour, especially the pretence of virtue or piety"). (James 3:13-18)

Wisdom has character and graces. It is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

What a challenge these three words present to us ~ **wisdom, understanding and knowledge!** May we be found seeking to grow and walk in the true meaning of these words, so others will see and know the handiwork of God in our lives

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EPILOGUE

We began this journey with three words — Wisdom, Understanding and Knowledge — and we end it with a challenge that is both simple and lifelong: will we steward what we have received?

Wisdom is not a destination. It is a discipline. It is built, brick by brick, through the choices we make every day: the voices we listen to, the company we keep, the books we open, the pride we lay down. Even Jesus, fully God and fully man, grew in wisdom. If He needed to grow, so do we.

The gifts of the Spirit we explored are not trophies to display — they are tools entrusted to us for the sake of others. The word of wisdom that solves an impossible problem. The word of knowledge that brings the hidden into the light. The gift of prophecy that reminds a weary heart they are seen. Every gift, every insight, every measure of understanding you carry — it was given to you for someone else.

So do not drift from these two goals: to walk in wisdom and to discover discernment. Keep learning. Keep asking. Keep your heart soft and your mind sharp. Partner with the Lord — He will do His part, and you do yours.

And when you are unsure, do what the wisest among us have always done: ask. "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." (James 1:5)

That promise has never expired. It is as fresh today as the morning it was written.

Go well. Walk wisely.

