

WISDOM vs FOOLISHNESS

WISDOM IS SEEING THE HAND OF GOD IN EVERY EXPERIENCE OF LIFE

“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding ” (Proverbs 4:7).

DEFINITION OF WISDOM

The primary Hebrew word for *wisdom* is *chokmah*. It comes from a root word meaning “intelligent, skillful, or artful; to be cunning.” *Sekel*, a second Hebrew word for *wisdom*, comes from a root meaning “to be circumspect, to act prudently, to prosper and have good success, to be expert, to behave oneself wisely, to teach, to guide wittingly.” In Proverbs, Solomon designates to “know wisdom (*chokmah*)” and “to receive the instruction of wisdom (*sekel*)” as the purpose of the book, (see Proverbs 1:2-3).

The basic Greek word for *wisdom* is *sophia*, which denotes practical skill and acumen. Another Greek term for *wise*, *phronimos*, denotes one who is “thoughtful, sagacious, or discreet.” It implies a cautious person.

God provides a description of wisdom (*sophia*) in James 3:17. “The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”

HOW DO YOU DEMONSTRATE WISDOM?

When Scripture first mentions wisdom, it involves the skillful making of things to benefit the work of God. First, Exodus 28:23 speaks of the preparation of the priestly garments. “And you shall speak to all the skillful persons whom I have endowed with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron’s garments to consecrate him, that he may minister as priest to Me,” (New American Standard).

Next, Exodus 31:1-6 tells of the wise construction of various buildings for the work of God. God filled with wisdom the man He chose to build the tabernacle. “Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship, to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze, and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship. And behold, I Myself have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the hearts of all who are skillful I have put skill, that they may make all that I have commanded you.’” (New American Standard).

The theme of building continues throughout Scripture in connection with the wise. God gave Solomon great wisdom and understanding, and with it, he built the temple. In the Book of Proverbs, he stated, “Wisdom hath builded her house” (Proverbs 9:1). Again he explained, “Though wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established” (Proverbs 24:3).

As a boy, Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature, and he worked as a carpenter in his father's shop. When he began his ministry, he used the analogy of a wise man building his house on a rock. Paul described his ministry by comparing himself to a wise master builder. (See Matthew 7:24 and I Corinthians 3:10.) Wisdom builds up, but foolishness tears down. "Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands" (Proverbs 14:1).

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS DO YOU FIND IN A WISE PERSON?

- A wise person will love one who rebukes him. "Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee" (Proverbs 9:8).
- The wise will consider the lessons of nature. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise" (Proverbs 6:6).
- A wise son delights the heart of his father. "A wise son maketh a glad father" (Proverbs 10:1).
- A wise person loves the law of God. "The wise in heart will receive commandments" (Proverbs 10:8).
- A wise person controls his tongue. "He who holds his tongue is wise" (Proverbs 10:19, New International Version).
- A wise person wins others to Christ. "He that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30).
- A wise person listens to counsel and instruction. "He that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise" (Proverbs 12:15). "A wise son heareth his father's instruction" (Proverbs 13:1).
- A wise person makes friends with the wise. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise" (Proverbs 13:20).
- A wise person knows how to use information in the right way. "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness" (Proverbs 15:2).
- A wise person will avoid conflicts with leaders. "The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it" (Proverbs 16:14).
- A wise person will learn how to give precise answers. "The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds persuasiveness to his lips," (Proverbs 16:23, New American Standard).
- A wise person knows how to give good counsel. "The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doeth not so" (Proverbs 15:7).
- A wise person will reform rebels. "A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame" (Proverbs 17:2).

WHY IS WISDOM SO IMPORTANT?

In order to explain the superior value of wisdom, God compares it to the most precious things in life.

1. It is more valuable than gold

"My fruit is better than gold, yea, than find gold; and my revenue than choice silver" (Proverbs 8:19).

2. **It is more precious than jewels**

“For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it” (Proverbs 8:11).

3. **It is more valuable than riches**

“Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness” (Proverbs 8:18).

4. **It should be our first priority**

“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding” (Proverbs 4:7).

WHAT GREAT HEROES OF FAITH RECEIVED WISDOM?

- **Joseph**

“Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art” and “he made him governor over Egypt and all his house” (Genesis 41:39; Acts 7:10).

- **Joshua**

“Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the Lord commanded Moses” (Deuteronomy 34:9).

- **Daniel**

”To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds,” and “In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom,” (Daniel 1:17, 20 New International Version).

- **David**

“And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him. Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him,” and “Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by,” (I Samuel 18:14-15, 30).

- **Ezra**

“And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not” (Ezra 7:25).

- **Stephen**

“Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom...and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost...And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake”(Acts 6:3-10).

WHAT ANIMALS SERVE AS EXAMPLES OF WISDOM?

In Proverbs 30:24-28, God identifies four animals as “exceeding wise”, and explains why.

1. The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer.
2. The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks.
3. The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands.
4. The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings’ palaces.

HOW DO YOU GET WISDOM?

1. **By asking God for it**—If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5).
2. **By studying God’s law**—“Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people” (Deuteronomy 4:6).
3. **By keeping God’s commandments with us**—“Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me” (Psalm 119:98).
4. **By fearing God**—“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10).
5. **By reading Proverbs**—The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity” (Proverbs 1:1-3).
6. **By God’s testimonies**—“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple” (Psalm 19:7).
7. **By hearing instruction**—Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not” (Proverbs 8:33).
“Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning” (Proverbs 9:9).
8. **By seeking it early**—I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me” (Proverbs 8:17).
9. **By listening to rebukes**—“Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning” (Proverbs 9:9).
10. **By seeking wise counsel**—“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise” (Proverbs 13:20).

HOW WISE ARE YOU?

- Do you go to sleep with thoughts of God so that your reigns can instruct you in the night seasons?
- Do you rise early in the morning to seek the wisdom of God?
- Have you developed skills so that you can make things with quality?
- Do you love those who rebuke you?
- Do you study the world of nature for insights and analogies?
- Do your parents take pleasure in your character and your actions?
- Have you searched for *rhemas* from Scripture and meditated upon them?
- Do you control your tongue because your heart is filled with truth?
- Do you know how to win others to Christ?
- Do you seek out the counsel of wise friends?
- Do you look for ways to apply the truths you have learned from God's Word?
- Do you value wisdom more than silver and gold or money?
- Do you study the testimonies in Scripture for application to your own life?
- Do you delight in the commandments of the Lord?
- Do you live in the reality that God is watching and evaluating everything you say and do?