

Journey Into Living Wisely In A Foolish World

Lesson 1 . . . Becoming Wise

We are beginning a study of the most practical book in the Bible—*Proverbs*. This book is a collection of God-given wisdom about money, marriage, work, anger, health, parenting, making friends, planning, success, etc. This book originates during a dream of Solomon’s in which God says: *Ask what I shall give thee* (1 Kings 3:5). In response, what does Solomon request in 1 Kings 3:9a?

This is not a selfish request because Solomon does not ask for money, power, fame, a long life, etc. Therefore, God grants his request (1 Kings 3:12), and one of the results is the book of Proverbs. Solomon became the wisest man ever to live until the coming of Jesus, who makes what declaration in the last phrase of Matthew 12:42?

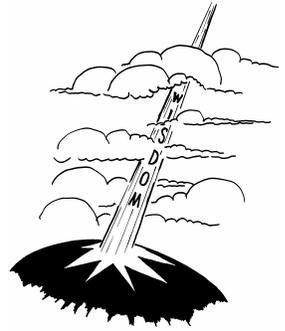
The book of Proverbs consists of 31 chapters, one for each day of the month. Reading one chapter each day for a month would be a fantastic “journey” into **becoming wise**. The word “wisdom” is found fifty times in the book of Proverbs.

Proverbs is one of five books that make up the “wisdom, or poetical, literature” section of the OT. The five books are *Job*, *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, and *Song of Solomon*. I remember them by JPES, which does not spell anything but helps me remember the order of the books of wisdom.

Becoming wise requires we understand **three** things: **the meaning of wisdom**, **the benefits of wisdom**, and **the acquisition of wisdom**.

The Meaning of Wisdom

Wisdom is not the same as knowledge. I know many people who have a lot of knowledge, are very well educated, even have PhD’s, but are not wise at all. The Hebrew word translated *wisdom* (חֹכְמָא, hok-mah) means skilled, intelligent, or understanding how to use knowledge or information. There is a big difference between being educated and being wise. We can



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get a great education and not know how to apply what we have learned. How does Proverbs 8:11 express the value of wisdom?

Biblical wisdom is knowing how to live “wisely in a foolish world.” Having discovered **the meaning of wisdom**, let’s now look at . . .

The Benefits of Wisdom



There are at least **five** benefits of wisdom:

1. Wisdom protects against deception. Every generation has more than its share of con artists who try to take advantage of people. Commercial after commercial on TV, endless emails, and mass mailings invite us to take advantage of the latest money-making schemes—real estate investments, internet businesses, precious metals, coins, etc. However, what does Proverbs 2:12 tell us about *wisdom*?

2. Wisdom produces a healthy life. Some of the most profitable businesses in our country are health-related, such as diet programs and exercise equipment. Almost all of early morning television is “paid programming” for the latest diet program or exercise machine. What does Proverbs 3:16a tell us about *wisdom*?

How can *wisdom* do this? For one thing, living wisely removes a lot of stress from our lives because we won’t make bad decisions about finances, relationships, jobs, etc. Also, if we are wise, we will avoid many accidents that foolish people have. We won’t do unwise things, like sawing a limb off a tree while sitting on the wrong side of the limb. If we are wise, we will have healthy habits regarding diet, exercise, and lifestyle.

3. Wisdom promotes financial success. One of the most foolish things in our world is how many people unwisely handle their personal finances. As wealthy people often say, “Making money is easy; keeping it is the hard part.” How does Proverbs 17:16 express this fact?

In other words, *a fool* will just waste his money. An insurance agent told me that when someone with a large life insurance policy dies, he tries to get the survivors to take the settlement in yearly installments over a ten or twenty year period. He said the reason for his advice is most people don't know how to handle money, so no matter how large the settlement, they are broke in three to five years. The book of Proverbs is filled with advice on handling money wisely.

4. Wisdom paves the way to peace. Foolish people are always stressed-out because they continually make bad decisions. But what does Proverbs 3:17b tell us about wisdom?



Wise people are also peacemakers, who try to bring *peace* to every situation. Foolish people are constantly creating division and conflict, while wise people are always *peaceable* (Jas. 3:17b).

5. Wisdom provides happiness. This really sums up what wisdom is all about. No matter what you have or what you accomplish, without wisdom nothing makes you happy. To enjoy all the good things we have in life, we must remember what truth found in Proverbs 3:13?

Wisdom produces blessedness, or happiness, because it reminds us from whom all our blessings come. The word translated *happy* (ESHER, eh-sheer) refers to the happiness that comes from knowing God has bestowed His favor or blessing on us. The wisdom that produces happiness remembers what fact found in James 1:17a?

Fame or fortune can't really make us happy unless we understand they are the result of God's favor in our lives. **Becoming wise** requires understanding **the meaning of wisdom, the benefits of wisdom,** and . . .

The Acquisition of Wisdom

We must do **three** things to gain wisdom. This could be called the "Triple A" process for gaining wisdom.

1. Acquire reverence for God. Why, according to Proverbs 9:10a?

The Hebrew word translated *fear* (YIRAH, year-awe) means reverence. The word “reverence” means an attitude of deep respect. When we respect people, we value their advice and take them seriously. *The beginning of wisdom* is taking God and His Word, the Bible, seriously.

2. Ask God. The only real source of wisdom is God. The Bible tells us: *For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding* (Prov. 2:6). The problem isn’t that the Lord doesn’t want to give us *wisdom*; the problem is we don’t ask. How is **the acquisition of wisdom** explained in James 1:5a?

The verb translated *ask* is present tense, which means continuous action. This is not a one-time request through which we gain *wisdom* for a lifetime. Rather, it means we *ask* God for *wisdom* before every decision. If we consistently **ask God** for *wisdom*, we will avoid many mistakes, much pain, and a lot of grief.

The “Triple A” process for **the acquisition of wisdom** is to **acquire reverence for God, ask God**, and . . .

3. Apply God’s Word. Wisdom isn’t just reading the truths in the book of Proverbs; it is remembering and putting them into practice. How does Proverbs 17:24 describe this principle?

Intelligent people keep their eyes fixed on *wisdom . . . but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth*, so they never find *wisdom*. To keep our eyes fixed on *wisdom*, we must remain focused on the Word of God, which contains the *wisdom* of God. This requires personal Bible study and faithfully attending worship services and group Bible studies.



Becoming wise requires we understand **the meaning of wisdom, the benefits of wisdom, and the acquisition of wisdom.**