

# GOD ALL WISE

A Gospel-Centered Exploration in  
1 KINGS, JOB, PROVERBS, and ECCLESIASTES



GREG BREAZEALE



# GOD ALL WISE

A GOSPEL-CENTERED EXPLORATION IN  
1 KINGS, JOB, PROVERBS, AND ECCLESIASTES

GREG BREAZEALE

© 2016 LifeWay Press®

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted in writing by the publisher. Requests for permission should be addressed in writing to LifeWay Press®, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0152.

Item: 005786041

ISBN: 978-1-4300-5900-4

Dewey decimal classification number: 231.6

Subject heading: GOD / WISDOM / SOLOMON, KING OF ISRAEL

**Eric Geiger**

Vice President, LifeWay Resources

**Ed Stetzer**

General Editor

**Trevin Wax**

Managing Editor

**Michael Kelley**

Director, Groups Ministry

**Joel Polk**

Content Editor

We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review LifeWay's doctrinal guideline, please visit [lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline](http://lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline).

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible®, copyright 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission.

For ordering or inquiries, visit [lifeway.com](http://lifeway.com); write LifeWay Small Groups; One LifeWay Plaza; Nashville, TN 37234-0152; or call toll free (800) 458-2772.

Printed in the United States of America.

Groups Ministry Publishing  
LifeWay Resources  
One LifeWay Plaza  
Nashville, Tennessee 37234-0152

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THE GOSPEL PROJECT AND WRITERS . . .	4
HOW TO USE THIS STUDY . . . . .	5
SESSION 1: . . . . .	6
<i>Solomon Asks for Wisdom</i>	
SESSION 2: . . . . .	18
<i>Wisdom for God's People</i>	
SESSION 3: . . . . .	30
<i>Solomon Builds the Temple</i>	
SESSION 4: . . . . .	42
<i>The Foolishness of a Once-Wise King</i>	
SESSION 5: . . . . .	54
<i>Solomon Reflects on the Meaning of Life</i>	
SESSION 6: . . . . .	66
<i>The Dilemma of Suffering</i>	
SMALL-GROUP TIPS AND VALUES . . . . .	78

## ABOUT THE GOSPEL PROJECT

Some people see the Bible as a collection of stories with morals for life application. But it's so much more. Sure, the Bible has some stories in it, but it's also full of poetry, history, codes of law and civilization, songs, prophecy, letters—even a love letter. When you tie it all together, something remarkable happens. A story is revealed. One story. The story of redemption through Jesus. This is *The Gospel Project*.

When we begin to see the Bible as the story of redemption through Jesus Christ, God's plan to rescue the world from sin and death, our perspective changes. We no longer look primarily for what the Bible says about us but instead see what it tells us about God and what He has done. After all, it's the gospel that saves us, and when we encounter Jesus in the pages of Scripture, the gospel works on us, transforming us into His image. *We become God's gospel project.*

## ABOUT THE WRITERS



**Greg Breazeale** resides with his wife, Heather, and three sons in Austin, Texas, where he is the North Campus pastor at The Austin Stone Community Church. He holds an MDiv from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and is currently pursuing a DMin in Expository Preaching at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

**Ali Claxton** adapted this material for use with small groups.

## HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Welcome to *The Gospel Project*, a gospel-centered small-group study that dives deep into the things of God, lifts up Jesus, focuses on the grand story of Scripture, and drives participants to be on mission. This small-group Bible study provides opportunities to study the Bible and to encounter the living Christ. *The Gospel Project* provides you with tools and resources to purposefully study God's Word and to grow in the faith and knowledge of God's Son. And what's more, you can do so in the company of others, encouraging and building up one another. Here are some things to remember that will help you maximize the usefulness of this resource:

**GATHER A GROUP.** We grow in the faith best in community with other believers, as we love, encourage, correct, and challenge one another. The life of a disciple of Christ was never meant to be lived alone, in isolation.

**PRAY.** Pray regularly for your group members.

**PREPARE.** This resource includes the Bible study content, three devotionals, and discussion questions for each session. Work through the session and devotionals in preparation for each group session. Take notes and record your own questions. Also consider the follow-up questions so you are ready to participate in and add to the discussion, bringing up your own notes and questions where appropriate.

**RESOURCE YOURSELF.** Make good use of the additional resources available on the Web at [gospelproject.com/additionalresources](http://gospelproject.com/additionalresources) and search for this specific title. Download a podcast. Read a blog post. Be intentional about learning from others in the faith. For tips on how to better lead groups or additional ideas for leading this Bible study, visit: [ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject](http://ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject).

**GROUP TIME.** Gather together with your group to discuss the session and devotional content. Work through the follow-up questions and your own questions. Discuss the material and the implications for the lives of believers and the mission to which we have been called.

**OVERFLOW.** Remember... *The Gospel Project* is not just a Bible study. *We* are the project. The gospel is working on us. Don't let your preparation time be simply about the content. Let the truths of God's Word soak in as you study. Let God work on your heart first, and then pray that He will change the hearts of the other people in your group.



SESSION 1

# SOLOMON ASKS FOR WISDOM

“We are accustomed to admit freely that God is more powerful than we are, but not that He is wiser than we are. To be sure, we may say that He is, but when it comes to a showdown, we do not want to act on what we say.”<sup>1</sup>

**MARTIN LUTHER (1483-1546)**

## INDIVIDUAL STUDY

What makes a great leader? We could list many things here: a prestigious education, high intelligence, a proven track record of achievement, a charismatic personality, or the ability to cast vision. These qualities could make a great leader, but they don't guarantee great leadership.

In *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman argues that what makes a great leader isn't a high IQ or off the charts talent, but a high level of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the sum of five skills: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill.<sup>2</sup> Though he sometimes misses the mark in his analysis, Goleman was essentially describing what the Bible calls wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. A good leader is a wise leader. Good leaders must know how to manage themselves, relate well to others, and discern between good and evil. They must know how to navigate in choppy waters.

Consider some of the great leaders of history. What made their leadership so significant?

As Christians, we believe that wisdom must go beyond the world's perspective because we believe wisdom comes from an all-wise God. God desires to give us wisdom as part of our relationship with Him. As we pursue Him by faith, He generously gives us the wisdom we need to live a life pleasing to Him.

In considering wisdom, we turn to the story of Solomon, the wisest of the kings of Israel. When God freed the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt, they were to be a light to all the other nations around them. They were to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (see Ex. 19:6). But this mission would be impossible if they weren't led by people who feared the Lord and walked in His ways.

In this session, we examine Solomon's prayer for wisdom and the incredible blessings God granted him in response. We will see how he requested God's wisdom, how he reigned in wisdom, and the blessings that resulted from his wisdom. We will also see how desperately God's people today need the wisdom and insight that only comes from walking with God.

Throughout the week, engage these daily study sections on your own. Each of these highlights the powerful and lasting impact of godly wisdom. There are three daily readings to prepare you before your group meets for this session. Interact with the Scriptures, and be ready to interact with your small group.

# 1

## The Request for Wisdom

We begin with one of the most remarkable stories in the Old Testament. God appeared to Solomon in a vision and said, “Ask. What should I give you?” (1 Kings 3:5). Many of us would love for God to come to us and ask this question.

Imagine yourself in this situation. If you could ask God for anything, what would you request?

Solomon could have asked for all sorts of things, but he chose to request wisdom. To more fully understand this request, let’s examine two things about his prayer: Solomon’s posture in the prayer and his purpose for the prayer.

<sup>5</sup> At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. God said, “Ask. What should I give you?”<sup>6</sup> And Solomon replied, “You have shown great and faithful love to Your servant, my father David, because he walked before You in faithfulness, righteousness, and integrity. You have continued this great and faithful love for him by giving him a son to sit on his throne, as it is today. <sup>7</sup> “LORD my God, You have now made Your servant king in my father David’s place. Yet I am just a youth with no experience in leadership. <sup>8</sup> Your servant is among Your people You have chosen, a people too numerous to be numbered or counted. <sup>9</sup> So give Your servant an obedient heart to judge Your people and to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?”<sup>10</sup> Now it pleased the LORD that Solomon had requested this. <sup>11</sup> So God said to him, “Because you have requested this and did not ask for long life or riches for yourself, or the death of your enemies, but you asked discernment for yourself to understand justice, <sup>12</sup> I will therefore do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has never been anyone like you before and never will be again. <sup>13</sup> In addition, I will give you what you did not ask for: both riches and honor, so that no man in any kingdom will be your equal during your entire life. <sup>14</sup> If you walk in My ways and keep My statutes and commands just as your father David did, I will give you a long life.”<sup>15</sup> Then Solomon woke up and realized it had been a dream. He went to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the LORD’s covenant, and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then he held a feast for all his servants.

1 KINGS 3:5-15

Notice how Solomon saw himself as he prayed. He began by confessing that he was “just a youth with no experience in leadership” (v. 7). He admitted that he had no business being the king of such a great people and recognized that he was there only by divine appointment: “You have now made Your servant king in my father David’s place” (v. 7). God placed him there. It was an act of God’s grace. Seeing himself and his weaknesses, Solomon felt compelled to ask for the one thing he knew he could not live without—God’s wisdom.

Seeing ourselves as we truly are should drive us to beg God for His wisdom. Recognizing God’s grace in our lives and admitting that the task before us is impossible in our own strength humbles us and causes us to seek divine discernment. When we think too highly of ourselves, we are in danger of walking in our own wisdom and strength. We must trust that humbling ourselves before God is always the best for us. We will never regret depending fully on God and casting all our care and anxiety on Him.

In what areas of your life are you tempted to feel self-sufficient?

What is the danger of leaning on your own understanding and not asking for God’s wisdom in those areas?

Solomon asked for God’s wisdom in order to lead God’s people well. He made a request for himself, but his intention was to use this wisdom to lead the people of Israel with justice and equity. In other words, his motivation for wanting wisdom was others-centered. That’s one reason why his prayer pleased the Lord.

God gives us wisdom so we can relate rightly to those around us. We need wisdom to be godly friends, husbands, wives, parents, and bosses.

For what relationships in your life do you most need God’s wisdom right now? Why?

# 2

## The Reign of Wisdom

After Solomon's prayer for wisdom, we see him confronted with a situation that would test the depth of understanding God had given him. Two prostitutes approached the king to resolve a dispute. Let's look at the story and see how Solomon responded.

<sup>16</sup> Then two women who were prostitutes came to the king and stood before him.

<sup>17</sup> One woman said, "Please my lord, this woman and I live in the same house, and I had a baby while she was in the house. <sup>18</sup> On the third day after I gave birth, she also had a baby and we were alone. No one else was with us in the house; just the two of us were there. <sup>19</sup> During the night this woman's son died because she lay on him.

<sup>20</sup> She got up in the middle of the night and took my son from my side while your servant was asleep. She laid him at her breast, and she put her dead son in my arms.

<sup>21</sup> When I got up in the morning to nurse my son, I discovered he was dead. That morning, when I looked closely at him I realized that he was not the son I gave birth to." <sup>22</sup> "No," the other woman said. "My son is the living one; your son is the dead one." The first woman said, "No, your son is the dead one; my son is the living one." So they argued before the king. <sup>23</sup> The king replied, "This woman says, 'This is my son who is alive, and your son is dead,' but that woman says, 'No, your son is dead, and my son is alive.'" <sup>24</sup> The king continued, "Bring me a sword." So they brought the sword to the king. <sup>25</sup> Solomon said, "Cut the living boy in two and give half to one and half to the other." <sup>26</sup> The woman whose son was alive spoke to the king because she felt great compassion for her son. "My lord, give her the living baby," she said, "but please don't have him killed!" But the other one said, "He will not be mine or yours. Cut him in two!" <sup>27</sup> The king responded, "Give the living baby to the first woman, and don't kill him. She is his mother." <sup>28</sup> All Israel heard about the judgment the king had given, and they stood in awe of the king because they saw that God's wisdom was in him to carry out justice.

### 1 KINGS 3:16-28

This story shows that God truly answered the prayer of Solomon. The people of Israel saw their king reigning in wisdom and discernment in a way that could only be attributed to God. Here we have proof that when God promised to give Solomon wisdom, God was committed to fulfilling His promise. This is the kind of God we serve, One who does what He says He will do.

This story shows us that we shouldn't only ask for God's wisdom, we should expect it! He gives it generously as we pursue Him by faith.

In his commentary on 1 & 2 Kings, Donald J. Wiseman describes wisdom as “the creative gift of God, of whom it is an attribute.” He goes on to say, “Wisdom is the right understanding of reality and is the basis of moral and ethical life. It is expressed in the conduct of life in the ‘fear (reverence, awe) of the LORD,’ which is its chief origin and aim.”<sup>3</sup> This is what we see taking place as Solomon was given wisdom to make decisions that honored and glorified God.

When have you sensed the Lord granting you wisdom as you gave advice to someone or as you made an important decision?

Why do you think God grants wisdom when we ask for it?

How is God glorified when we speak and act with wisdom?

Think about the role of a parent. How tragic would it be if our children needed our help but failed to ask us for fear we wouldn't grant it! Our God is a prayer-answering God. He responds to our cries for wisdom because it's something He loves to grant. Our God longs to see His people walk in wisdom, which is why He is so eager to grant it as we ask it of Him.

You'll likely never be confronted with the same situation as Solomon (let's hope not!). But you'll face problems in which the solution isn't clear. For instance, a business deal comes your way that could change your life dramatically, yet it requires moving your family across the country. What do you do? Or one day your child asks you why his classmate has two mommies. What do you say? How do you respond?

There are countless situations where we need wisdom. Thankfully, our God is the all-wise God. He alone has all wisdom and understanding. Let's go to Him and expect that He will graciously and generously respond to us.

What keeps you from expecting God to joyfully grant you wisdom when you ask for it?

# 3

## The Results of Wisdom

We've read how Solomon asked God for wisdom and then how God gave him wisdom in order to reign over Israel with justice. Now we read how Solomon's wisdom resulted in the spread of Israel's fame to the rest of the world. Solomon's reputation extended to all the nations around him and his knowledge seemed to have no limits. We read here the wonderful blessings that came to him when he humbly submitted himself to God and walked in the wisdom God provided.

<sup>29</sup> God gave Solomon wisdom, very great insight, and understanding as vast as the sand on the seashore. <sup>30</sup> Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. <sup>31</sup> He was wiser than anyone—wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, sons of Mahol. His reputation extended to all the surrounding nations. <sup>32</sup> Solomon composed 3,000 proverbs, and his songs numbered 1,005. <sup>33</sup> He described trees, from the cedar in Lebanon to the hyssop growing out of the wall. He also taught about animals, birds, reptiles, and fish. <sup>34</sup> People came from everywhere, sent by every king on earth who had heard of his wisdom, to listen to Solomon's wisdom.

1 KINGS 4:29-34

We're always at our best when we're walking in God's wisdom. While we may not compose 3,000 proverbs, we can trust God for wisdom as we talk to our neighbor about the gospel. We can wisely respond to our spouse who may be walking through a difficult season. We can navigate the rocky terrain of life as we receive the wisdom God provides.

This is why Solomon wrote so elegantly about pursuing wisdom: "Happy is a man who finds wisdom and who acquires understanding, for she is more profitable than silver, and her revenue is better than gold. She is more precious than jewels; nothing you desire compares with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left, riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant, and all her paths, peaceful. She is a tree of life to those who embrace her, and those who hold on to her are happy" (Prov. 3:13-18).

How true this is! We need wisdom more than anything—even a pay raise! We must fight to believe this. Too often we think that money or power or approval is what we need the most. But Solomon's life is evidence that when all is said and done, it's wisdom from God that aids us best in our time of need.

Do you pursue wisdom when life is going well or only when you have a specific need?

How has godly wisdom helped you navigate both good and difficult seasons in your life?

One area we especially need wisdom in is the area of mission. God gives us wisdom so we can better announce the gospel to the world. In other words, wisdom is essential for the mission we've been called to as believers!

If we're going to be salt and light in the world, we need wisdom. We need it to rightly relate to the non-Christians around us. We need it to show how money and power and pleasure are not what matter most in this life. We need wisdom as we interact with those who are skeptical or even hostile to Christianity. It was because of Solomon's wisdom—granted by God—that people came from everywhere to hear from him (1 Kings 4:34).

Wisdom makes our lives appealing and attractive to those around us. The world needs to see God-given wisdom. They need to see Christians walking wisely when it comes to money, parenting, and even suffering. They need to see that the gospel has fully equipped us and empowered us to live righteous, generous, and gracious lives in this broken world.

We're surrounded by people who do not know the Lord—and seem to have no desire to do so. We need wisdom to know how to talk with them, and live winsomely around them. We need to see wisdom on display in our lives as we interact with the world. We need wisdom in order to serve, bless, and love those around us.

What are some ways you can celebrate God's wisdom in your life?  
How would you explain to someone that wisdom is more valuable than wealth, power, or approval?

Are you living your life as if you believe godly wisdom is more precious than earthly things? Explain.

● ● ●  
GROUP STUDY

---

## Warm Up

Who is the wisest person you've ever known personally? How have you seen wisdom exhibited in his or her life?

Would you consider yourself wise? Why or why not?

Describe examples of how the world defines wisdom. How do those examples differ from the wisdom we find in Scripture?

Of all the attributes we should desire in our lives, wisdom is often overlooked or misunderstood. The world sees wisdom as knowledge or enlightenment obtained through study, meditation, and practice. The end result of being wise by the world's standards is greater influence, increasing success, and a more centered life. But this isn't what we find in Scripture. True wisdom isn't the product of our efforts. It's a gift from God. True wisdom doesn't make us greater. It humbles us and shifts our gaze to the glory of God.

During this time, you will have an opportunity to discuss what God revealed to you throughout the week. Listed on the next page are some of the questions from your daily reading assignments. They will guide your small group discussion.

---

“Wisdom should not be equated with intellectual giftedness or philosophical brilliance. Wisdom expresses itself in the way one lives. Human beings do not have the capacity to acquire wisdom on their own, for that would require ascending to heaven, and thus those who are wise put their trust in the words revealed by God.”<sup>4</sup>

TOM SCHREINER

---

## Discussion

1. Discuss some of the great leaders of history. What made their leadership so significant?
2. If you could ask God for anything, what would you request?
3. In what areas of your life are you tempted to feel self-sufficient? What is the danger of leaning on your own understanding and not asking for God's wisdom in those areas?
4. For what relationships in your life do you most need God's wisdom right now? Why?
5. When have you sensed the Lord granting you wisdom as you gave advice to someone or as you made an important decision? Explain the circumstances.
6. What keeps you from expecting God to joyfully grant you wisdom when you ask for it?
7. What are some ways you can celebrate God's wisdom in your life?
8. How would you explain to someone that wisdom is more valuable than wealth, power, or approval?

## Conclusion

As we unpack the story of Solomon, we see a king who got it right in so many ways. God used him to accomplish tremendous things. His story shows us much to emulate. But more than anything, Solomon's life stirs within us a longing for a true king. We long for one to rule over us in perfect wisdom and faithfulness. Solomon points us to a perfect king, one who would reign in wisdom and never falter in his trust in God. He points us to Jesus Christ, the true King who rules and reigns in infinite wisdom. In fact, Paul said, "All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in [Christ]" (Col. 2:3).

There's a King even better than Solomon. We can know this King. We can come under the reign and lordship of this King. The wise person is the one who looks to Jesus and fully submits to Him in everything. You want to see wisdom? Then take a glance at Solomon, but set your gaze on Jesus. May we live for our true King and announce His kingship to the world around us.

**Spend some time praying this for you and for your group:**

"God, we are in awe of You—Your power, Your grace, and Your glory. Give us wisdom to see You for who You are and to live in such a way that the world sees Your light in us. By the power of Your Spirit, equip us for the work You have called us to and let Your name be glorified in our words and actions."

1. Ewald Plass, *What Luther Says* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publ. House, 1959), 1453.
2. Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam, 2006).
3. Donald J. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings*, vol. 9 in *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), 94.
4. Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 288.
5. George Whitefield, "An Exhortation to the People of God Not to Be Discouraged in Their Way, by the Scoffs and Contempt of Wicked Men," in *Sermons on Important Subjects* (London: Henry Fisher, Son, and P. Jackson, 1828), 606.





SESSION 2

# WISDOM FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

“The book of Proverbs will not allow you to be a passive learner, merely soaking up information. It requires you to put God’s wisdom to work in your life.”<sup>1</sup>

**ANTHONY SELVAGGIO**

## INDIVIDUAL STUDY



What is wisdom? Some people point to knowledge and information. Others think of wisdom as life experience. A few might recall pithy one-liners similar to what you find in fortune cookies.

But how does the Bible talk about wisdom? We need look no further than the ant. Yes, the ant! Now, I know ants are rarely chosen as the epitome of, well, anything. But that's the point that Solomon wanted to make when he used the ant as an example of wisdom: "Go to the ant, you slacker! Observe its ways and become wise. Without leader, administrator, or ruler, it prepares its provisions in summer; it gathers its food during harvest. . . . Four things on earth are small, yet they are extremely wise: the ants are not a strong people, yet they store up their food in the summer" (Prov. 6:6-8; 30:24-25).

The focus here isn't the ant's knowledge or experience or intellect. The point is the ant knows how to live. The ant knows what it should do. It knows how to navigate the seasons of life. What an amazing, but unlikely, place to look for wisdom, insight, and discernment!

Wisdom isn't less than knowledge, but it's certainly more than knowledge. Wisdom isn't merely about what we know. It's about how we live. Wise people know how to live faithfully in the world. They know how to tame their tongue, delay gratification, control their desires, and even suffer well.

**What are some situations you're facing right now where wisdom is needed?**

In this session, we look at the Proverbs to see how God has given us His Word to instruct us in wisdom. We'll see how wisdom is rooted in the fear of the Lord, how it leads us to trust in God, and how it offers us practical guidance in everyday matters of life. We'll also see that wisdom points us to Jesus Christ, and how living wisely leads us to point others to Him, as well.

Throughout the week, engage these daily study sections on your own. Each of these examines the spiritual and practical implications of wisdom. There are three daily readings to prepare you before your group meets for this session. Interact with the Scriptures, and be ready to interact with your small group.

# 1

## Wisdom Is Rooted in Fear

Wisdom starts with a relationship with God. He is the fountain of all wisdom, insight, and knowledge, and thus, only the fool attempts to live without God. That's the argument Solomon made in the opening verses of Proverbs:

<sup>1</sup> The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: <sup>2</sup> For learning what wisdom and discipline are; for understanding insightful sayings; <sup>3</sup> for receiving wise instruction in righteousness, justice, and integrity; <sup>4</sup> for teaching shrewdness to the inexperienced, knowledge and discretion to a young man—<sup>5</sup> a wise man will listen and increase his learning, and a discerning man will obtain guidance—<sup>6</sup> for understanding a proverb or a parable, the words of the wise, and their riddles. <sup>7</sup> The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and discipline.

### PROVERBS 1:1-7

Notice first how being wise is related to receiving information. Wisdom involves understanding, insightful sayings, instruction, learning, and knowledge. As previously stated, wisdom is more than knowing information, but it's certainly not less. Knowing how to live is dependent on ideas, sayings, and teachings.

So wisdom isn't just something that "comes to us," like a special intuition; it's a gift from God that's granted through His Word (which includes Proverbs—31 chapters of information). God wants us to hear, learn, and obey. He intends to instruct, guide, and exhort His people with knowledge and insight.

This means that as Christians, we must avail ourselves to the information around us. We must be diligent to study, read, learn, and grow.

**How should a Christian's receiving of instruction differ from an unbeliever's?**

Wisdom involves information, but we must never believe that because we have lots of information, we're wise. Solomon went on to say that wisdom is rooted in the fear of the Lord (v. 7). We must start with God, who alone possesses all wisdom and knowledge.

Think about that for a moment. God literally knows all things about all things. He never learns. He never has a new thought. He's never surprised by new information. He knows all

---

information exhaustively. He's an expert on everything. There is no body of data out there that He doesn't know about. For this reason, it's foolish not to fear Him (see verse 7). God isn't one option among many avenues to true wisdom. He's the *only* option!

Why is it essential for us as Christians to recognize and trust that God is all-knowing?

What does "the fear of the Lord" mean in this context?

Wisdom, in the biblical sense, isn't available to someone who doesn't fear the Lord or walk in His ways. In other words, we can't expect God to give us wisdom without also expecting Him to ask for our full obedience. It can't work any other way. We go to Him first. We desire Him first. Only then does God pour out His wisdom on us. We must fear Him, which doesn't mean we cower in fear before Him, but that we learn to revere Him and regard Him above all else. No one is more valuable, no possession more precious to us, than the Lord.

We should also note here that Solomon used the word "LORD" (Hebrew, YHWH). This is not a mere title; this is God's name. Solomon envisioned a person who feared the Lord and trusted that He—and He alone—brought Israel out of Egypt and established the people for Himself. This is the God who is to be feared and revered. And by doing so, one becomes wise. No other definition of wisdom can suffice.

There's a difference between worldly wisdom and biblical wisdom. Although people in our society may consider themselves wise, Solomon would make a distinction between the world's wisdom and true God-given wisdom. Biblical wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord, and this is a central theme in Proverbs, and in the Bible as a whole.

Why must we fear the Lord to become wise?

Why is it impossible for people to be truly wise without fearing God and walking in His ways?

# 2

## Wisdom Leads Us to Faith

A fool despises wisdom and discipline, which is another way of saying that a fool despises the Lord, since he doesn't fear the Lord. Godly wisdom leads us not only to fear the Lord but also to trust Him, rely on Him, and keep Him at the center of our lives.

<sup>1</sup> My son, don't forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commands; <sup>2</sup> for they will bring you many days, a full life, and well-being. <sup>3</sup> Never let loyalty and faithfulness leave you. Tie them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. <sup>4</sup> Then you will find favor and high regard in the sight of God and man. <sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; <sup>6</sup> think about Him in all your ways, and He will guide you on the right paths. <sup>7</sup> Don't consider yourself to be wise; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. <sup>8</sup> This will be healing for your body and strengthening for your bones. <sup>9</sup> Honor the LORD with your possessions and with the first produce of your entire harvest; <sup>10</sup> then your barns will be completely filled, and your vats will overflow with new wine. <sup>11</sup> Do not despise the LORD's instruction, my son, and do not loathe His discipline; <sup>12</sup> for the LORD disciplines the one He loves, just as a father, the son he delights in.

### PROVERBS 3:1-12

If we had to summarize Solomon's main point in this passage, we might say: "Put your faith in the Lord, not in yourself." Wisdom is rooted in the fear of the Lord, and our fear of God must translate into a rock solid faith in Him. So what does faith in God look like?

**Faith in God means we throw off self-reliance (see verses 5-8).** Only fools think they've arrived. In fact, they have arrived because fools can go no further than their own worldly wisdom can take them! This is why Solomon pleaded with his son to trust in the Lord with all his might. This, in turn, meant he was never to trust his own wisdom and understanding, nor to consider himself wise by his own standards.

We aren't the standard of wisdom. We aren't to trust in ourselves and think that we've mastered life. In fact, it's impossible to trust in ourselves and at the same time trust in the Lord. One will inevitably drive out the other. Leaning on our experience and insight naturally tempers our ability and urgency to trust in the Lord. On the other hand, the more we trust in the Lord, the less we will trust in ourselves. We'll discover that as we trust in the Lord, He directs our paths and leads us into joy and peace.

---

Consider a few areas of life in which you're tempted to rely on yourself.  
What would shifting your reliance from self to God look like?

**Faith in God means we let Him manage our money (see verses 9-10).** It's impossible to talk about having faith in God without eventually getting to the subject of money. Jesus said that we can't serve God and money (see Matt. 6:24). Think about that for a second. Jesus knew that money has a god-like power. It can give us status, acclaim, and security.

Solomon tells us that faith in God must translate into trusting Him with our finances. We can debate the ins and outs of how much we ought to give, but our conviction on this matter should always be considered in light of the cross. Our God gave everything to us. In light of this, we must trust Him with all our lives and possessions.

What does foolishness look like in financial matters? What does wisdom look like?

**Faith in God means we suffer well (see verses 11-12).** Since God loves us, He must discipline us. Because He wants our growth, maturity, and holiness, He chooses to send trials and difficulties our way. Solomon said we must interpret these events as evidence that God delights in us. He compared this to a father who delights in his son. It's precisely because he delights in his son that he must discipline him.

Deep faith compels us to trust God in the midst of trials and sorrows, believing that He is good and does good (see Ps. 119:68). There's no greater way to experience the blessings and fullness God has for us than by trusting Him in every situation and obeying all He says to do. This is our message to a world so consumed with self-reliance and self-exaltation. Wisdom offers another way, a way that leads to peace, joy, and hope.

What are some of the obstacles we face when it comes to faith in God?

How can we see difficulties not as obstacles but as opportunities for trusting in God?

# 3

## Wisdom Shows Us How to Live

Proverbs is a practical book. And that should come as no surprise since wisdom is about life. Wisdom is truth in action. God wants us not only to know things, but to do things. Solomon intended for his hearers to actually live out the truths and sayings he put forth. Here are some examples:

<sup>1</sup> A good name is to be chosen over great wealth; favor is better than silver and gold. <sup>2</sup> The rich and the poor have this in common: the LORD made them both. <sup>3</sup> A sensible person sees danger and takes cover, but the inexperienced keep going and are punished. <sup>4</sup> The result of humility is fear of the LORD, along with wealth, honor, and life. <sup>5</sup> There are thorns and snares on the path of the crooked; the one who guards himself stays far from them. <sup>6</sup> Teach a youth about the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it. <sup>7</sup> The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is a slave to the lender. <sup>8</sup> The one who sows injustice will reap disaster, and the rod of his fury will be destroyed. <sup>9</sup> A generous person will be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor. <sup>10</sup> Drive out a mocker, and conflict goes too; then quarreling and dishonor will cease.

### PROVERBS 22:1-10

It's tempting to read God's instructions in Scripture, talk about them, but never actually do them. James warned us of the dangers of merely hearing the word when he said, "But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (Jas. 1:22).

Reading these words without doing them is self-deception. When Jesus gave the Great Commission, He said, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). Jesus wants us to do what He said, not simply learn what He said. We often fall into a mind-set that suggests information automatically results in transformation. To be sure, we need information, but what Jesus wants us to do is obey the instruction we've been given.

**What are some practical takeaways found in Proverbs 22:1-10?**

Let's look at each verse in this section and summarize what we've been called to do.

- Verse 1: Build your character, not just your bank account.
- Verse 2: Don't think your worth is based on what you have or don't have.
- Verse 3: Know your limitations.
- Verse 4: Be humble!
- Verse 5: Guard yourself.
- Verse 6: Teach your children wisdom.
- Verse 7: Be careful and wise with debt.
- Verse 8: Live justly.
- Verse 9: Be generous.
- Verse 10: Don't be afraid to confront difficult people.

Now step back and look at this list. Think of all the areas that we covered and all the life-issues we addressed. And that was in 10 verses! Wisdom comes crashing into every aspect of our lives—our finances, our parenting, our attitudes, and our posture toward the world. Wisdom leaves no stone unturned when it comes to our lives. God has spoken to us. The question is will we listen and obey. Will we actually do what He tells us to do?

Do you approach Scripture as information that can help you live a better life or as truth that can transform your life?

How has obeying God's Word strengthened your faith and given you peace?

The danger for many of us is to memorize, study, and discuss the Word with one another, but never actually get around to doing it. These words, and all that God has said, must take root in our hearts and result in actual obedience to God. Only then can we really call others to embrace them and obey what God has said.

We sometimes make foolish mistakes, even when we know the wiser way. How does the gospel help us deal with our foolishness?

How does the gospel help us respond to the foolishness of others?



## GROUP STUDY

---

# Warm Up

What is the best advice you've ever been given?

Describe a situation where wisdom kept you from harm or steered you away from making a poor decision.

If you could pass down one piece of wisdom to the next generation, what would you want them to know?

There are practical benefits to wisdom—this reality applies to both earthly wisdom and godly wisdom. Information and instruction can keep us from harm or help us make better choices, but only biblical wisdom leads to lasting peace. True wisdom is rooted in the character of God and can only be experienced by those who walk with Him.

During this time, you will have an opportunity to discuss what God revealed to you throughout the week. Listed on the next page are some of the questions from your daily reading assignments. They will guide your small group discussion.

---

“As the Psalms focus on man in relationship to God, the Proverbs focus on man in relationship to man. But the relationships one bears to other men are always against the backdrop of one's relationship to God, which affects these lesser ones.”<sup>2</sup>

JAY ADAMS

---

## Discussion

1. What are some situations you're facing right now where wisdom is needed?
2. How should a Christian's receiving of instruction differ from an unbeliever's?
3. Why must we fear the Lord to become wise?
4. Why is it impossible for people to be truly wise without fearing God and walking in His ways?
5. In what areas of life are you most tempted to rely on yourself? What would shifting your reliance from self to the Lord look like in these cases?
6. What are some of the obstacles we face when it comes to faith in God?
7. How can we see difficulties not as obstacles but as opportunities for trusting in God?
8. We sometimes make foolish mistakes, even when we know the wiser way. How does the gospel help us deal with our foolishness?

## Conclusion

We saw at the beginning of this session that wisdom starts with a relationship with God. We see this even more vividly in the New Testament when Paul wrote, “But it is from Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became God-given wisdom for us—our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). In Jesus, we see that wisdom isn’t merely information or insight; wisdom is a Person.

Jesus is God’s wisdom on full display. And this Person did something that looks like foolishness in the eyes of the world—He laid down His life for us. Now, because of His death and resurrection, we can know and follow Jesus. We can fear Him. We can put all of our faith in Him. As we do, He makes us wise people who reflect His name and announce His gospel in the world around us.

**Spend some time praying this for you and for your group:**

“God, thank You that Your infinite wisdom is beyond what our finite minds can comprehend. Thank You that Your Word is full of truth pointing us to Your character and compassion. Thank You that we’re made wise by Your Spirit within us, enabling us to know You, to fear You, to trust You, and to obey You.”

1. Anthony Selvaggio, *A Proverbs Driven Life* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2008), 24.
2. Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s Commentary* (Woodruff: Timeless Texts, 1997), 2.
3. Jonathan Leeman, “Wisdom,” *The Gospel Project: Adult Leader Guide* (Winter 2012-13): 113.

