



**A TOUCH OF
WISDOM**

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Forward

The wise man knows the ways of the Lord.

Hosea 14:9

Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them for the ways of the LORD are right, and the righteous will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them.

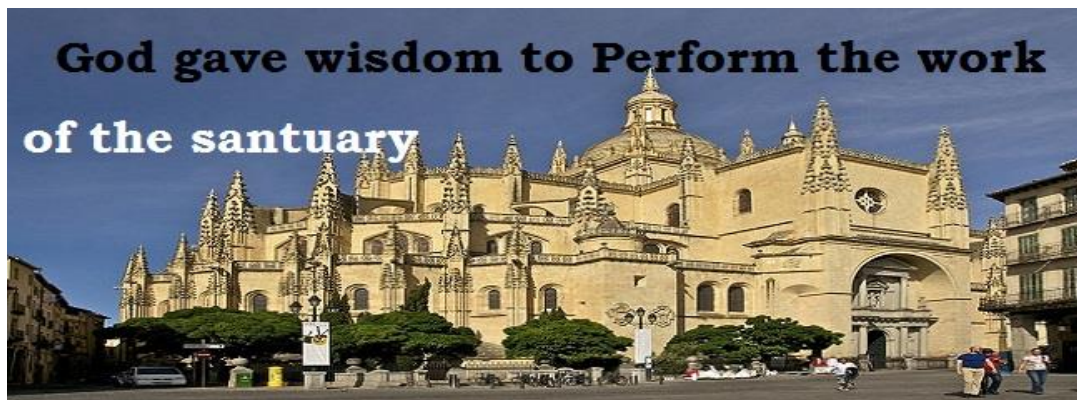
God regards all the skills of his people, not merely those with theological or ministerial abilities. Our tendency is to regard only those who are up front and in leadership roles.

God gave Bezalel and Oholiab Spirit-filled abilities in artistic craftsmanship. Take notice of all the abilities God gives his people. Don't diminish your skills if they are not like Moses' and Aaron's.

Throughout this study, you will learn many ways and times that God has given to his people to do a work for him.

God needs you. Allow God's wisdom to engulf your spirit and life, and be known as a person who experiences true understanding.

Chapter 1



Wisdom to perform the work of the sanctuary

Exodus 36:1

"Now Bezalel and Oholiab, and every skillful person in whom the LORD has put skill and understanding to know how to perform all the work in the construction of the sanctuary, shall perform in accordance with all that the LORD has commanded."

God raised up skillful men for every kind of work that was done in building the sanctuary.

I have given some with the spirit of wisdom

Exodus 28:3

"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."

God was teaching his people how to worship him. To do so, he needed ministers to oversee the operations of the tabernacle and to help the people maintain their relationship with God.

Men were called priests and Levites, and they could only be members of the tribe of Levi. Exodus 28-29 gives some details about priests. Not only was a priest from the tribe of Levi, but he also was a descendant of Aaron, Israel's first high priest. Priests had more responsibilities than Levites.

As high priest, Aaron was in charge of all the priests and Levites. The priests performed the daily sacrifices, maintained the tabernacle, and counseled the people on how to follow God. They were the people's representatives before God and thus were required to live worthy of their office.

Jesus is now our high priest (Hebrews 8). Daily sacrifices are no longer required because he sacrificed himself on the cross for our sins. Today ministers no longer sacrifice animals.

They lead us in prayer and teach us about both the benefits and the commandments that characterize our new life as Christians.

The spirit of God in wisdom and understanding

Exodus 31:2-6

"Look, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, grandson of Hur, of the tribe of Judah.

I have filled him with the Spirit of God, giving him great wisdom, intelligence, and skill in all kinds of crafts.

He is able to create beautiful objects from gold, silver, and bronze. He is skilled in cutting and setting gemstones and in carving wood. Yes, he is a master at every craft!

"And I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to be his assistant. Moreover, I have given special skill to all the naturally talented craftsmen so they can make all the things I have instructed you to make:

God regards all the skills of his people, not merely those with theological or ministerial abilities. Our tendency is to regard only those who are up front and in leadership roles. God gave Bezalel and Oholiab Spirit-filled abilities in artistic craftsmanship.

Take notice of all the abilities God gives his people. Don't diminish your skills if they are not like Moses' and Aaron's.

God has given knowledge to make designs.

Exodus 35:30-35

And Moses told them, "The Lord has chosen Bezalel son of Uri, grandson of Hur, of the tribe of Judah.

The Lord has filled Bezalel with the Spirit of God, giving him great wisdom, intelligence, and skill in all kinds of crafts.

He is able to create beautiful objects from gold, silver, and bronze. He is skilled in cutting and setting gemstones and in carving wood. In fact, he has every necessary skill.

And the Lord has given both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach their skills to others.

The Lord has given them special skills as jewelers, designers, weavers, and embroiderers in blue, purple, and scarlet yarn on fine linen cloth. They excel in all the crafts needed for the work.

Those who spun cloth made a beautiful contribution to the tabernacle. Good workers take pride in the quality and beauty of their work. God is concerned with the quality and beauty of what you do. Whether you are a corporate executive or a drugstore cashier, your work should reflect the creative abilities God has given you.

Making cloth (spinning and weaving) took a great deal of time in Moses' day. To own more than two or three changes of clothes was a sign of wealth. The effort involved in making enough cloth for the tabernacle was staggering. The tabernacle would never have been built without tremendous community involvement. Today, churches and neighborhoods often require this same kind of pulling together. Without it, many essential services wouldn't get done.

God gave the women hearts stirred with skill.

Exodus 35:25-26

All the skilled women spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun, in blue and purple and scarlet material and in fine linen. All the women whose heart stirred with a skill spun the goats' hair.

Now Moses called a meeting of all the people and told them, "You must obey these instructions from the Lord. Each week, work for six days only. The seventh day is a day of total rest, a holy day that belongs to the Lord. Anyone who works on that day will die. Do not even light fires in your homes on that day."

Skillful men made the tabernacle

Exodus 36:8

All the skillful men among those who were performing the work made the tabernacle with ten curtains; of fine twisted linen and blue and purple and scarlet material, with cherubim, the work of a skillful workman, Bezalel made them.

Making cloth (spinning and weaving) took a great deal of time in Moses' day. To own more than two or three changes of clothes was a sign of wealth. The effort involved in making enough cloth for the tabernacle was staggering. The tabernacle would never have been built without tremendous community involvement. Today, churches and neighborhoods often require this same kind of pulling together. Without it, many essential services wouldn't get done.

Chapter 2



All skillful men work.

1 Chronicles 22:15

"Moreover, there are many workmen with you, stonecutters and masons of stone and carpenters, and all men who are skillful in every kind of work.

God told David he would not be the one to build the temple. Instead the task would be left to his son Solomon.

David graciously accepted this “no” from God. He was not jealous of the fact that his son would have the honor of building God’s temple, but instead made preparations for Solomon to carry out his task.

Similarly, we should take steps now to prepare the way for our children to find and fulfill God’s purpose. Sooner or later our children will have to make their own decisions, but we can help by supplying them with the proper tools: showing them how to pray and study God’s Word, the difference between right and wrong, and the importance of church involvement.

The officials and skillful men will be at your command.

1 Chronicles 28:21

"Now behold, there are the divisions of the priests and the Levites for all the service of the house of God, and every willing man of any skill will be with you in all the work for all kinds of service. The officials also and all the people will be entirely at your command."

David advised Solomon not to be frightened about the size of his task as king and builder of the temple. Fear can immobilize us. The size of a job, its risks, or the pressure of the situation can cause us to freeze and do nothing. One remedy for fear is found here—don't focus on the

Men needed to work with skillful men

2 Chronicles 2:7

"Now send me a skilled man to work in gold, silver, brass and iron, and in purple, crimson and violet fabrics, and who knows how to make engravings, to work with the skilled men whom I have in Judah and Jerusalem, whom David my father provided.

We should try our best to build beautiful and helpful places of worship to be a testimony and credit to God. In so doing, however, we must remember that God cannot be contained in our building or beautiful setting. He is far greater than any building, so we must focus our praise on him and not merely on the place of worship.

Why use foreign craftsmen? The Israelites had great knowledge of agriculture, but knew little about metalworking.

So they found people who were experts in this area. It is not a sin to obtain secular expertise for God's work. He distributes natural talents as he chooses, and he often decides to give skill to non-Christians.

When we hire secular contractors to build or repair our church buildings, we are recognizing that God gives gifts liberally. We may also be gaining an opportunity to tell the workers about God.

Israel did not have much wood, but Lebanon, a small nation on the seacoast, had some of the finest cedar forests in the ancient Near East. Lebanon also imported a great deal of food from Israel. Thus the two kings made a trade agreement that was beneficial to both nations.

King Solomon brings workers with wisdom.

1 Kings 7:13-14

Now King Solomon sent and brought Hiram from Tyre. He was a widow's son from the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in bronze; and he was filled with wisdom and understanding and skill for doing any work in bronze so he came to King Solomon and performed all his work.

Hiram was an expert craftsman. Solomon chose only the best.

Skillful craftsmen were sought out.

Isaiah 40:20

He who is too impoverished for such an offering selects a tree that does not rot; He seeks out for himself a skillful craftsman to prepare an idol that will not totter.

Isaiah describes God's power to create, his provision to sustain, and his presence to help. God is almighty and all-powerful; but even so, he cares for each of us personally.

No person or thing can be compared to God (Isaiah 40:25). We describe God as best we can with our limited knowledge and language, but we only limit our understanding of him and his power when we compare him to what we experience on earth.

What is your concept of God, especially as revealed in his Son, Jesus Christ? Don't limit his work in your life by underestimating him.

The skillful hands of a goldsmith

Jeremiah 10:9

Beaten silver is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, The work of a craftsman and of the hands of a goldsmith; Violet and purple are their clothing; they are all the work of skilled men.

Tarshish was located at the westward limit of the ancient world, perhaps in what is now Spain (see Jonah 1:3). It was a source of silver, tin, lead, and iron for Tyre (Ezekiel 27:12). The location of Uphaz is unknown. Instead, it may be a metallurgical term for “refined gold.”

No matter how well made or how beautiful idols are, they can never have the power and life of the true and living God.

Wisdom to deal with the merchants

Ezekiel 27:8-9

"The inhabitants of Sidon and Arvad were your rowers; your wise men, O Tyre, were aboard; they were your pilots. “The elders of Gebal and her wise men were with you repairing your seams; all the ships of the sea and their sailors were with you in order to deal in your merchandise.

Foolishness of fools is deceit

Proverbs 14:8

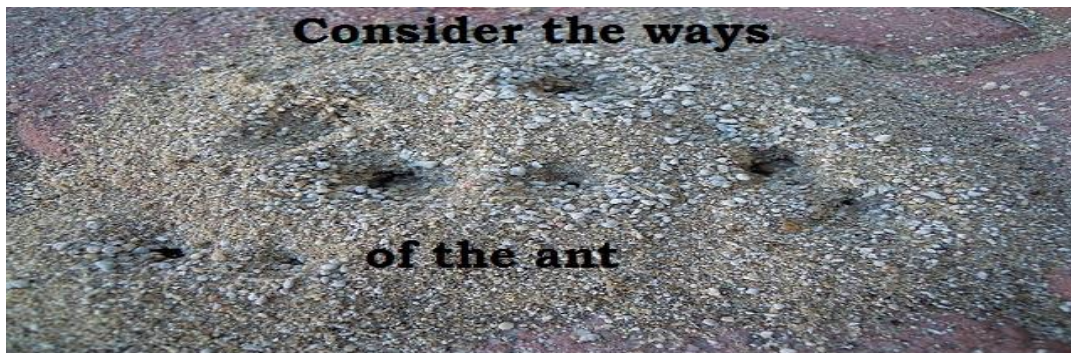
The wisdom of the sensible is to understand his way, but the foolishness of fools is deceit.

These verses, like Proverbs 10:3, contrast two paths in life, but are not intended to apply universally to all people in all circumstances. God’s people are not excluded from problems or struggles. If a person follows

God's wisdom, however, God can rescue him or her from trouble. But a wicked person will fall into his or her own traps.

Even if good people suffer, they can be sure they will ultimately be rescued from eternal death.

Chapter 3



Consider the ways of the ant

Proverbs 6:6

Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise.

Those last few moments of sleep are delicious—we savor them as we resist beginning another workday. But Proverbs warns against giving in to the temptation of laziness, of sleeping instead of working. This does not mean we should never rest: God gave the Jews the Sabbath, a weekly day of rest and restoration.

But we should not rest when we should be working. The ant is used as an example because it utilizes its energy and resources economically. If laziness turns us from our responsibilities, poverty may soon bar us from the legitimate rest we should enjoy. (See also the chart in Proverbs 28:19.)

He who sleeps in the harvest acts shamefully

Proverbs 10:5

He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully.

Every day has 24 hours filled with opportunities to grow, serve, and be productive. Yet it is so easy to waste time, letting life slip from our grasp. Refuse to be a lazy person, sleeping or frittering away the hours meant for productive work. See time as God's gift and seize your opportunities to live diligently for him.

It is a man's glory to overlook a transgression.

Proverbs 19:11

A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression.

Whoever is intoxicated is not wise.

Proverbs 20:1

Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.

A person who is truly confident of his or her strength does not need to parade it. A truly brave person does not look for chances to prove it. A resourceful woman can find a way out of a fight. A man of endurance will avoid retaliating. Foolish people find it impossible to avoid strife. Men and women of character can. What kind of person are you?

A foolish man swallows up a precious treasure.

Proverbs 21:20

There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man swallows it up.

This proverb is about saving for the future. Easy credit has many people living on the edge of bankruptcy. The desire to keep up and to accumulate more pushes them to spend every penny they earn, and they stretch their credit to the limit. But anyone who spends all he has is spending more than he can afford. A wise person puts money aside for when he or she may have less. God approves of foresight and restraint. God's people need to examine their life-styles to see whether their spending is God-pleasing or merely self-pleasing.

A wise man does not lose his temper.

Proverbs 29:11

A fool always loses his temper, but a wise man holds it back.

“The LORD gives sight to the eyes of both” means that everyone depends on God for sight. Both the oppressor and the poor have the gift of sight from the same God. God sees and judges both, and his judgment falls on those whose greed or power drives them to oppress the poor.

A wise man brings down the stronghold.

Proverbs 21:22

A wise man scales the city of the mighty and brings down the stronghold in which they trust.

This is a general observation that would have been especially applicable to an obedient Israelite living in Solomon’s God-fearing kingdom. Nevertheless, some have been martyrs at a young age, and some have given away all their wealth for the sake of God’s kingdom. The book of Proverbs describes life the way it should be. It does not dwell on the exceptions.

By understanding, the boundaries of the people were removed.

Isaiah 10:13

For he has said, "By the power of my hand and by my wisdom I did this, for I have understanding; and I removed the boundaries of the peoples and plundered their treasures, and like a mighty man I brought down their inhabitants.

The predicted punishment of the Assyrians soon took place. In 701 B.C., 185,000 Assyrian soldiers were slain by the angel of the Lord (Isaiah 37:36-37). Later, the Assyrian empire fell to Babylon, never to rise again as a world power.

The Assyrians were haughty. They thought they had accomplished everything in their own power. Our perspective can become distorted by our accomplishments if we fail to recognize God working his purposes through us. When we think we are strong enough for anything, we are bound to fail because pride has blinded us to the reality that God is ultimately in control.

By wisdom and understanding were acquired.

Ezekiel 28:4-5

"By your wisdom and understanding you have acquired riches for yourself and have acquired gold and silver for your treasuries. "By your great wisdom, by your trade you have increased your riches and your heart is lifted up because of your riches—

Daniel, an important official in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom (Ezekiel 14:14), was already renowned for his wisdom. Daniel proclaimed that all his wisdom came from God (Daniel 2:20-23). By contrast, the king of Tyre thought that he himself *was* a god. When truly wise people get closer to God, they recognize their need to depend on him for guidance.

Pharaoh's wisest advisors became stupid.

Isaiah 19:11

The princes of Zoan are mere fools; the advice of Pharaoh's wisest advisers has become stupid how can you men say to Pharaoh, "I am a son of the wise, a son of ancient kings"?

Egypt was noted for its wisdom, but here its wise men and officials were deceived and foolish. True wisdom can come only from God. We must ask him for wisdom to guide our decisions, or we will also be uncertain and misdirected. Are you confused about something now? Ask God for wisdom to deal with it.

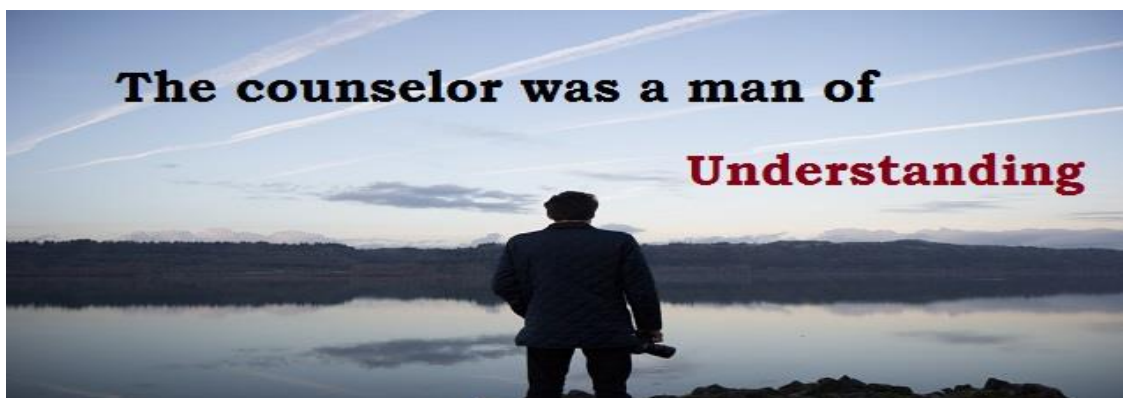
All wise men were brought up to hear Daniel's wisdom.

Daniel 4:6

"So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream.

Although Nebuchadnezzar praised Daniel's God, he still did not believe in him completely or submit to him alone (Daniel 4:8). Many people attend church and use spiritual language, but they really don't believe in God or obey him. Profession doesn't always mean possession. How do your beliefs match with your obedience?

Chapter 4



The counselor was a man of understanding.

1 Chronicles 27:32-33

Also Jonathan, David's uncle, was a counselor, a man of understanding, and a scribe; and Jehiel the son of Hachmoni tutored the king's sons. Ahithophel was counselor to the king; and Hushai the Archite was the king's friend.

When Absalom rebelled against David, Ahithophel betrayed David and joined the rebellion. Hushai pretended loyalty to Absalom, and his advice caused Absalom's downfall (2 Samuel 15:31-17:23).

Joseph advises the king to choose a wise man.

Genesis 41:33-36

"My suggestion is that you find the wisest man in Egypt and put him in charge of a nationwide program.

Let Pharaoh appoints officials over the land, and let them collect one-fifth of all the crops during the seven good years.

Have them gather all the food and grain of these good years into the royal storehouses, and store it away so there will be food in the cities. That way there will be enough to eat when the seven years of famine come. Otherwise disaster will surely strike the land, and all the people will die."

After interpreting Pharaoh's dream, Joseph gave the king a survival plan for the next 14 years. The only way to prevent starvation was through careful planning; without a famine plan Egypt would have turned from prosperity to ruin.

Many find detailed planning boring and unnecessary. But planning is a responsibility, not an option. Joseph was able to save a nation by translating God's plan for Egypt into practical actions (implementation). We must take time to translate God's plan for us into practical actions too.

The wisdom of the Lord knows all that is in the earth.

2 Samuel 14:20

In order to change the appearance of things your servant Joab has done this thing. But my lord is wise, like the wisdom of the angel of God, to know all that is in the earth."

God gave wisdom to Solomon and there was peace.

1 Kings 5:12

The LORD gave wisdom to Solomon, just as He promised him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a covenant.

Solomon drafted three times the number of workers needed for the temple project and then arranged their schedules so they didn't have to be away from home for long periods of time.

This showed his concern for the welfare of his workers and the importance he placed on family life. The strength of a nation is in direct proportion to the strength of its families. Solomon wisely recognized that family should always be a top priority.

As you structure your own work or arrange the schedules of others, watch for the impact of your plans on families.

Daniel was made ruler over the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel 2:48

Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.

After being named ruler over the whole province of Babylon and placed in charge of the wise men, Daniel requested that his companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, be appointed as his assistants. Daniel knew that he could not handle such an enormous responsibility without capable assistants, so he chose the best men he knew—his three Hebrew companions.

A competent leader never does all the work alone; he or she knows how to delegate and supervise. Moses, Israel's greatest leader, shared the burden of administration with dozens of assistants. (This story is in Exodus 18:13-27.)

God's wisdom in Joseph brought him honor.

Genesis 41:39

So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you are.

Joseph rose quickly to the top, from prison walls to Pharaoh's palace. His training for this important position involved being first a slave and then a prisoner.

In each situation he learned the importance of serving God and others. Whatever your situation, no matter how undesirable, consider it part of your training program for serving God.

The land is ruined because there was no wise man.

Jeremiah 9:12

Who is the wise man that may understand this? And who is he to whom the mouth of the LORD has spoken, that he may declare it? Why is the land ruined, laid waste like a desert, so that no one passes through?

As this section opens, God sends Jeremiah to the temple gates to confront the false belief that God will not let harm come to the temple and those who live near it.

Jeremiah rebukes the people for their false and worthless religion, their idolatry, and the shameless behavior of the people and their leaders. Judah, he says, is ripe for judgment and exile. This happened during the reign of Jehoiakim, a puppet of Egypt. The nation, in shock over the death of Josiah, was going through a spiritual reversal that removed much of the good Josiah had done.

The themes of this section are false religion, idolatry, and hypocrisy. Jeremiah was almost put to death for this sermon, but he was saved by the officials of Judah (see Jeremiah 26).

Let him with wisdom understand prophecy

Revelation 13:18

Here is wisdom let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.

In every generation, Christians need to maintain a healthy skepticism about society's pleasures and rewards. In our educational, economic, and civic structures, there are incentives and rewards. Cooperating Christians must always support what is good and healthy about our society, but we must stand against sin. In some cases, such as Satan's system described here, the system or structure becomes so evil that there is no way to cooperate with it.

This mark of the beast is designed to mock the seal that God places on his followers (Rev. 7:2-3). Just as God marks his people to save them, so Satan's beast marks his people to save them from the persecution that Satan will inflict upon God's followers. Identifying this particular mark is not as important as identifying the purpose of the mark.

Those who accept it show their allegiance to Satan, their willingness to operate within the economic system he promotes, and their rebellion against God. To refuse the mark means to commit oneself entirely to God, preferring death to compromising one's faith in Christ.

The meaning of this number has been discussed more than that of any other part of the book of Revelation.

The three sixes have been said to represent many things, including the number of man or the unholy trinity of Satan, the first beast, and the false prophet (Rev. 16:13).

If the number seven is considered to be the perfect number in the Bible, and if three sevens represent complete perfection, then the number 666 falls completely short of perfection. The first readers of this book

probably applied the number to the Emperor Nero, who symbolized all the evils of the Roman Empire.

(The Greek letters of Nero's name represent numbers that total 666.) Whatever specific application the number is given, the number symbolizes the worldwide dominion and complete evil of this unholy trinity designed to undo Christ's work and overthrow him.

The wise many know the ways of the Lord.

Hosea 14:9

Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them for the ways of the LORD are right, and the righteous will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them.

Hosea closes with an appeal to listen, learn, and benefit from God's word. To those receiving the Lord's message through Hosea, this meant the difference between life and death.

For you, the reader of the book of Hosea, the choice is similar: either listen to the book's message and follow God's ways, or refuse to walk along the Lord's path. But people who insist on following their own direction without God's guidance are "like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble" (Proverbs 4:19). If you are lost, you can find the way by turning from your sin and following God.

God's concern for *justice* that requires faithfulness and *love* that offers forgiveness can be seen in his dealings with Hosea. We can err by

forgetting God's love and feeling that our sins are hopeless, but we can also err by forgetting his wrath against our sins and thinking he will continue to accept us no matter how we act. *Forgiveness* is a key word: when God forgives us, he judges the sin but shows mercy to the sinner. We should never be afraid to come to God for a clean slate and a renewed life.

Know the secrets of wisdom

Job 11:6

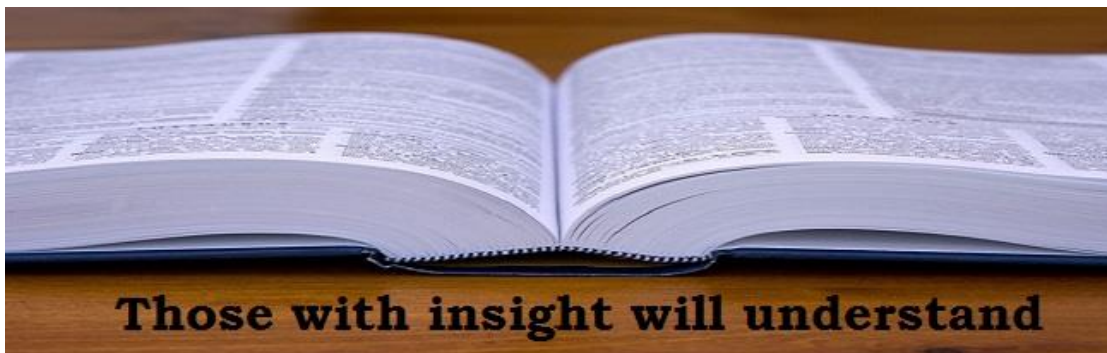
And show you the secrets of wisdom! For sound wisdom has two sides
Know then that God forgets a part of your iniquity.

The wise consider God's understanding.

Psalm 107:43

Who is wise? Let him give heed to these things, and consider the loving kindnesses of the LORD.

Chapter 5



Those with insight will understand.

Daniel 12:10

"Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand.

Trials and persecutions make very little sense to us when we experience them. But they can purify us if we are willing to learn from them. After you survive a difficult time, seek to learn from it so that it can help you in the future. See Romans 5:3-5 for more on God's purpose in our sufferings.

The fear of the Lord is wisdom.

Job 28:28

"And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding.'"

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.

Proverbs 1:7

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

In this age of information, knowledge is plentiful, but wisdom is scarce. Wisdom means far more than simply knowing a lot. It is a basic attitude that affects every aspect of life.

The foundation of knowledge is to fear the Lord—to honor and respect God, to live in awe of his power, and to obey his Word. Faith in God should be the controlling principle for your understanding of the world, your attitudes, and your actions. Trust in God—he will make you truly wise.

Do not be wise in your own eyes.

Proverbs 3:7

Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.

To receive God's guidance, said Solomon, we must acknowledge God in all our ways. This means turning every area of life over to him. About a thousand years later, Jesus emphasized this same truth (Matthew 6:33). Look at your values and priorities. What is important to you? In what areas have you not acknowledged him?

What is his advice? In many areas of your life you may already acknowledge God, but it is in the areas where you attempt to restrict or ignore his influence that will cause you grief. Make him a vital part of everything you do; then he will guide you because you will be working to accomplish his purposes.

Knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

You can tell by the way you respond to criticism. Instead of tossing back a quick put-down or clever retort when rebuked, listen to what is being said. Learn from your critics; this is the path to wisdom. Wisdom begins with knowing God. He gives insight into living because he created life. To know God is not just to know the facts about him, but to stand in awe of him and have a relationship with him. Do you really want to be wise? Get to know God better and better.

It is sound wisdom to fear the name of the Lord.

Micah 6:9

The voice of the LORD will call to the city-- And it is sound wisdom to fear your name: "Hear, O tribe. Who has appointed its time?"

People have tried all kinds of ways to please God (Micah 6:6-7), but God has made his wishes clear: he wants his people to be just, merciful, and to walk humbly with him.

In your efforts to please God, examine these areas on a regular basis. Are you fair in your dealings with people? Do you show mercy to those who wrong you? Are you learning humility?

The wisdom of understanding, counsel and strength

Isaiah 11:2

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 the fear of the LORD.

Assyria would be like a tree cut down at the height of its power (Isaiah 10:33-34), never to rise again. Judah (the royal line of David) would be like a tree chopped down to a stump. But from that stump a new shoot would grow—the Messiah. He would be greater than the original tree and would bear much fruit. The Messiah is the fulfillment of God's promise that a descendant of David would rule forever (2 Samuel 7:16).

God will give a spirit of wisdom, revelation in the knowledge of him.

Ephesians 1:17

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

Paul prayed that the Ephesians would know Christ better. Christ is our model, and the more we know of him, the more we will be like him. Study Jesus' life in the Gospels to see what he was like on earth nearly 2,000 years ago, and get to know him in prayer now. Personal knowledge of Christ will change your life.

Be filled with knowledge of spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Colossians 1:9

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Paul was exposing a heresy in the Colossian church that was similar to *Gnosticism* (see the note on ■Col. 2:4ff for more information). Gnostics valued the accumulation of knowledge, but Paul pointed out that knowledge in itself is empty.

To be worth anything, it must lead to a changed life and right living. His prayer for the Colossians has two dimensions:

- (1) That they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding, and
- (2) That they would bear fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.

Knowledge is not merely to be accumulated; it should give us direction for living. Paul wanted the Colossians to be wise, but he also wanted them to *use* their knowledge.

Knowledge of God is not a secret that only a few can discover; it is open to everyone. God wants us to learn more about him, and also to put belief into practice by helping others.

Give understanding that I may observe your law

Psalm 119:34

Give me understanding, that I may observe your law and keep it with all my heart.

The saved recognize the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

I know very well how foolish the message of the cross sounds to those who are on the road to destruction. But we who are being saved recognize this message as the very power of God. As the Scriptures say,

"I will destroy human wisdom and discard their most brilliant ideas."

So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world's brilliant debaters? God has made them all look foolish and has shown their wisdom to be useless nonsense.

Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never find him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save all who believe.

God's way seems foolish to the Jews because they want a sign from heaven to prove it is true. And it is foolish to the Greeks because they believe only what agrees with their own wisdom.

So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended, and the Gentiles say it's all nonsense. But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the mighty power of God and the wonderful wisdom of God.

This "foolish" plan of God is far wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is far stronger than the greatest of human strength.

Paul summarizes Isaiah 29:14 to emphasize a point Jesus often made: God's way of thinking is not like the world's way (normal human wisdom). And God offers eternal life, which the world can never give.

We can spend a lifetime accumulating human wisdom and yet never learn how to have a personal relationship with God. We must come to the crucified and risen Christ to receive eternal life and the joy of a personal relationship with our Savior.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: New Living Bible translation.

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House

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