

WONDERFUL COUNSELOR, MIGHTY GOD,
ETERNAL FATHER, PRINCE OF PEACE,
HOLY ONE, LAMB OF GOD, PRINCE OF LIFE,
LION OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH, ROOT OF
DAVID, WORD OF LIFE, LORD OF ALL,
SON OF GOD, SHEPHERD AND GUARDIAN
OF SOULS, THE MESSIAH, THE BRIGHT
MORNING STAR, THE CHIEF SHEPHERD,
THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH, THE SUN OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS, THE RESURRECTION
AND THE LIFE, THE ALPHA AND THE
OMEGA, THE BEGINNING AND THE END,
THE FIRST AND THE LAST, THE WAY,
THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

THE GREAT I AM

May I willingly submit to Your lordship over every area of my life; may I abide in You, hope in You, trust in You, love You, obey You, and follow You in all You tell me to do, for Your sake. Then I will see, with greater clarity, that Your service is true freedom, that Your yoke is light, and that Your cross is glorious.

A teaching letter encouraging believers to develop a clear mind and a warm heart.



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The Promises of God

THE ONLY WISE GOD—JAMES 1:5

Everyone encounters situations in which they feel absolutely “skill-less”—and those situations do not feel good. Insecurity, worry, fear, doubt, and self-pity begin to gather 'round like wolves circling a lone moose.

Maybe it's a financial crisis—you've gotten to the end of your money way before the end of your month. Maybe it's a family crisis—you discover that someone you trusted is not who you thought he or she was. Or maybe it's a friendship crisis—it was hard enough finding one person in this world to talk to, and now that person is gone. If it's not one of those three, it will be a foreign crisis—something that you never dreamed would ever happen to you or someone you care about: an illness, accident, or catastrophe of unimagined proportions. You park yourself in a chair by yourself and think:

I have no idea how I got here.

How did this happen?

What in the world am I supposed to do now?

James, the half-brother of Jesus, knew what to do—but he had to learn it. Over a period of years, he made the transition from not even believing in his brother (John 7:5) to leading the assembly of believers in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13; Galatians 2:9).

“When you are boxed in with no place to go,” James says, “you must ask God for wisdom” (James 1:5; my paraphrase). The Jewish readers of this epistle would have known exactly what its author meant. For us today, wisdom takes some explaining.

Westerners think wisdom is a cognitive attribute (and that is part of what wisdom

is), but it started out as a kinesthetic attribute—a motor skill. Wisdom was something you did, not something you thought or said. The Hebrew word for wisdom (*hokmah*) was applied in the Old Testament to weavers, builders, navigators, warriors—people skilled in their craft. Therefore, wisdom in life is the skill of living life successfully.

The next time you feel unsuccessful at life, ask the heavenly Father for success skills; the “only wise God” (Romans 16:27) welcomes your request and will honor it. In fact, the one who was skilled at creating life is the best one to ask how it should be lived.

GOD'S PROMISE TO YOU:

“Feeling unskilled is the first step toward receiving My wisdom.”

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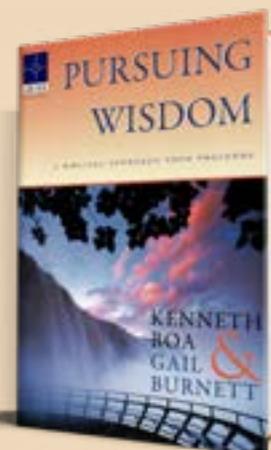


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PURSUING WISDOM



Pursuing Wisdom presents an overview of Proverbs, examines the nature and source of wisdom, and considers the practices that enhance wisdom and the snares that lead to foolishness.

Print Book = \$15

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WISDOM (Part 1)

Colin Smith tells about a recent trip to northern England, where he and his family had the opportunity to visit Durham Cathedral. This magnificent place of prayer has stood for more than 900 years, still offering services daily. The main structure took 200 years to build! There were men who worked their entire lives on one level of the building and died knowing that even their grandchildren wouldn't live to see it completed.

Smith says that the next day, he and his family drove past some apartment buildings that were thrown up in the 1960s. After only 40 years the buildings were in a terrible state. The problems weren't just cosmetic; the buildings themselves were falling apart.

The contrast was striking. One building had been wonderfully put together and was still awe-inspiring after nearly 1,000 years. The other had been thrown together, and within a short time was an absolute mess. What a clear illustration of the difference between wisdom and folly! Centuries after Durham Cathedral was complete, men and women have much more knowledge in the areas of construction and engineering. And what do we produce with this knowledge? Ugly and shoddy apartment buildings!

THE PURPOSE OF WISDOM

Wisdom has less to do with knowledge than it has to do with the application of knowledge in very specific ways. Wisdom is skill in the art of living life with each component under the dominion of God. When a person in the Old Testament demonstrated exceptional ability in a craft or art, that person was said to have what the Hebrew language calls *hokmah*. English-

speaking translators render it as "skill."

In Exodus 31:3-5, God filled a man named Bezalel with the Holy Spirit and "with *wisdom*, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills—to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts" (NIV, italics added). The word "wisdom" (sometimes translated "skill") in verse 3 is *hokmah*.

Bezalel was given the ability to take raw materials and shape them into something beautiful and ornate. Likewise, in the book of Proverbs, we are viewed as that raw material. We are valuable but unshaped, worthwhile but undisciplined. We are precious but given to waywardness. We do not have within us the ability to take the raw material of our lives and shape it into the lifestyle our Creator desires us to live. Solomon selected that Hebrew word *hokmah* to describe the quality needed by anyone who wanted to live life in the superlative—a life of excellence.

THE PURSUIT OF WISDOM

The theme of the entire book of Proverbs is this: *pursue wisdom*. With the tone of a father giving instructions to his sons, Solomon writes:

Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. . . . Do not forsake my teaching. . . . Get wisdom, get understanding. . . . Do not forsake wisdom. . . . Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost you all you have, get understanding. . . . Accept what I say. . . . I guide you in the way of wisdom. (Proverbs 4:1-11, NIV with my paraphrase)

Verse after verse, the message is the same: *pursue wisdom*, because it pays:

Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her; those who hold her fast will be blessed. (Proverbs 3:13-18, NIV)

Wisdom is that quality that enables one to live a noticeably, recognizably outstanding life. Imagine how much this wonderful thing called wisdom can contribute to effective leadership. Not all leaders think about wisdom as a character trait that needs to be carefully cultivated. Of course, we would quickly agree (at least intellectually) that wisdom is more valuable than money or status. But how many of us pursue wisdom with the same vigor with which we pursue wealth? How many of us cultivate wisdom with the same passion we use to cultivate our stock portfolio?

Somehow, we believe that wisdom just comes by itself. Certainly, wisdom can and often is the end result of long experience in a person's field of expertise. But the person who gains wisdom by making poor decisions and learning from them is much further behind than the one who seeks the right kind of wisdom from the start.

In other words, learning from our own mistakes can lead to wisdom in the end. Malcolm Muggeridge said, "Every happening, great and small, is a parable whereby God speaks to us, and the art of

life is to get the message." Events in our lives are not neutral; they are God-given opportunities to gain wisdom. In Proverbs 8 wisdom is portrayed as a woman calling out for all to embrace her. Notice especially what she claims:

I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion. To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech. Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have insight, I have power. By me kings reign and rulers issue decrees that are just; by me princes govern, and nobles—all who rule on earth. I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me. With me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity. My fruit is better than fine gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver. I walk in the ways of righteousness, along the paths of justice, bestowing a rich inheritance on those who love me and making their treasuries full. (Proverbs 8:12-21, NIV)

What person in his or her right mind would not want such a priceless tool? Why would we not heed wisdom's invitation? Imagine this wise and wonderful woman, gazing into your eyes and saying:

Now then, my children, listen to me; blessed are those who keep my ways. Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not disregard it. Blessed are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. For those who find me find life and receive favor from the Lord. (Proverbs 8:32-35, NIV)

Could anything be more valuable than this?

THE MASTER WHO *loves* US

Jesus had no servants,
yet they called him "Master."

He had no degree,
yet they called him "Teacher."

He had no medicines,
yet they called him "Healer."

He had no army,
yet kings feared him.

Jesus won no military battles,
yet he conquered the world.

He committed no crime,
yet they crucified him.

He was buried in a tomb,
yet he lives today.

**FEEL HONORED TO SERVE
SUCH A LEADER WHO LOVES US.**



**YOU CAN FULLY TRUST IN THE FATHER
AND IN MESSIAH JESUS, HIS SON.**