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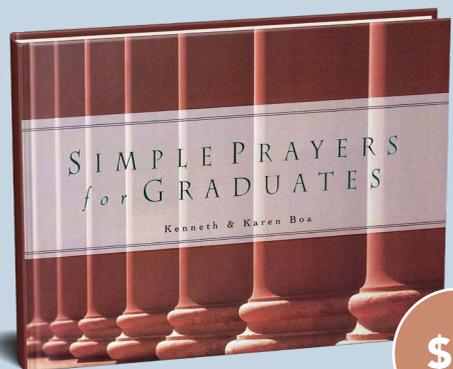
Sign up today for a message in your inbox
each morning containing:

- An illustrated **Scripture** focus (a Bible chapter per day)
- **Prayer** guidance rooted in Scripture
- **Encouragement** for your day from *Handbook to Wisdom*
- A **weekly verse** (for memorization/meditation)

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LOOKING FOR A GRADUATION GIFT?

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The Promises of God

OUR GREATEST NEED | 1 KINGS 3:6-13

Everybody governs something. You may not be a king or president of a country, but you likely have the responsibility of overseeing some group of people. And with that administration come responsibilities that can seem overwhelming.

Consider the family. Whether you are the mother or the father, you share the responsibilities for money, children, education, medical care, extended family relationships, and church and civic involvement. Overseeing a family is probably the most intense job in the world. But even if you're not married, you may oversee a group of employees at your job. Or what about church? Perhaps you lead a committee or teach a Sunday school class. Everybody oversees something.

What if God came to you in a dream and told you He was so pleased with you that He would grant you anything you wanted to help with your administrative responsibilities—what would you ask for? With regard to the family, perhaps more financial resources would be an option. At your job, you might choose a promotion to a position with even greater responsibilities. In the church or community, you might ask for more influence to witness for the Lord. All of those requests could be justified. But if we look at the answer King Solomon gave to the same question, we find an even higher priority.

Solomon was the newly named king of Israel, following in his father David's footsteps. He was young and inexperienced with massive responsibilities. He humbly realized that, without God's help, he was inadequate for the task.

He even admitted he didn't know how to carry out his new job. Only one thing would allow him to be successful: a wise and discerning heart. God's immediate response was this: "You could have asked for long life or riches, or the death of your enemies, but you have asked for the best thing. Therefore, I will give you wisdom and discernment to lead my people" (1 Kings 3:11-12, my paraphrase).

In reality, do any of us feel totally adequate for the tasks God has given us? Whether you are leading a company or a committee, a franchise or a family, a nation or a neighborhood, God is asking, "What do you need?" A wise heart is not a bad first choice.

GOD'S PROMISE TO YOU:

"I delight in granting a request for a wise and discerning heart."

REFLECTIONS MINISTRIES

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REFLECTIONS

Reflections on God's
revealed truth

We are all
one
in Christ Jesus

Holy Father, all glory, honor, and praise are Yours not only because of who You are but also for what You have done. You have broken the yoke of sin and of slavery in the lives of those who trust in You, and You have overcome the enmity and alienation that plagues relationships among those who embrace your rule and authority. Wherever the true gospel of salvation and sanctification by grace through faith has spread, people have been transformed in the wake. Because of the Good News, the old distinctions that separated and estranged people need no longer rule our hearts. In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus. I praise You for the gift of freedom that overcomes the bondage of sin and unites us together into one body, of which He is the head.



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



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WISDOM PART FOUR || THE PAIN OF IGNORING WISDOM

How many of us have looked back across the ruins of failure and said, “I knew better; why didn’t I listen?” Solomon offers an essential fact about wisdom that scares the discerning reader into thinking twice about heeding wisdom’s invitation:

Wisdom calls aloud in the street, she raises her voice in the public squares; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out, in the gateways of the city she makes her speech: “How long will you simple ones love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge? If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you. But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you—when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you. Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me. Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the Lord, since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes. For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm.” (Proverbs 1:20–33)

Gary Richmond, a former zookeeper, tells about an experience a friend had with a raccoon. He explains that raccoons go through a glandular change at about 24 months. After that, they often attack their owners. Since a 30-pound raccoon can be equal to a 100-pound dog in a scrap, Richmond explains, he felt compelled to warn his young friend, named Julie, of the change coming to her pet raccoon. She listened politely as he explained the coming danger. She responded by saying what people always say, “It will be different for me.” She smiled and added, “Bandit wouldn’t hurt me. He just wouldn’t.” Three months later, Julie underwent plastic surgery for facial lacerations sustained when Bandit attacked her for no apparent reason. Bandit was released into the wild.¹

God is not often interested in shortcuts, but there is a God-given shortcut to wisdom. Solomon assures us: “He who walks with the wise grows wise” (Proverbs 13:20a). We are given the opportunity to learn wisdom from others who are further down the road than we are. We don’t have to live and learn; we can learn and live. Yet, as James Emery White points out, this is contrary to how most people go about their lives:

I am shocked at how many people attempt to make life-changing decisions, try to determine God’s will for their lives, or seek to follow their life purposes, and never bring other people into the process! This causes you to miss out on two very important tools that God wants to use in guiding you, the first being objectivity. You’re not objective about yourself, much less your life. Neither am I. I’m surrounded by my emotions, my circumstances,

my biases, and my desires. I need to go to people who can see things independently of all that. But that’s not all I get through counsel. I also get wisdom. When I go to someone else, I get his or her experiences, maturity, and knowledge concerning what I’m trying

to decide. This isn’t about running your life by committee, or taking what somebody says and feeling as if you have to follow it. It certainly shouldn’t be used as a shortcut to the hard work of studying the Bible for God’s moral will, or investing in prayer, evaluating

circumstances, and using your common sense. But going to someone who is intimate with God, intimate with you, and able to tell you what you may not want to hear, is invaluable.²

Here is the critical principle of wisdom: The person who refuses to act on what he or she knows, who refuses wise counsel, who ignores sage advice, will get in trouble. In the resulting despair, that good information will haunt that person; the fact that he or she knew what wisdom advised will become a cruel joke. While this passage says that wisdom will laugh and taunt, all the noise will come from inside this person’s own head. When he or she searches for some intelligent way out of the pit he or she has so foolishly dug, there will be no wisdom left.

The fool lives in the present moment while the sage considers the longer-term consequences of present action.

The long-range view is a basic tenet of wisdom. The fool lives in the present moment while the sage considers the longer-term consequences of present action. The next time you hear someone say, “I know better,” or “Why didn’t I listen?” you’ll recognize this song of wisdom-after-the-fact.

Wisdom calls (Proverbs 1:20–21). Some listen (verse 33); some don’t (verses 21–32).

¹ Gary Richmond, *A View from the Zoo* (Nashville, TN: W. Publishing Group, 1987), 115–116.

² James Emery White, *You Can Experience... a Purposeful Life* (Nashville, TN: Word, 2000), 160.

TWO PATHS, TWO CHOICES, TWO CONSEQUENCES

From the Garden of Eden to the present, God has given us the privilege of choice and free will. By our choices, we embrace God or rebel against Him. The choices are ours, but the consequences are not.

William Ernest Henley (1849–1903), a cripple since childhood and one of the early humanists, penned these defiant words. His is the quintessential statement of a life centered on self, a life in rebellion against God:

*Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.*

*In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.*

*Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.*

*It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.*

“CHOOSE YOU THIS DAY WHOM YOU WILL SERVE.” (JOSHUA 24:15)

A century later, Dorothea Day answered Henley’s “Invictus” with this lovely poem, entitled “My Captain”:

*Out of the light that dazzles me,
Bright as the sun from pole to pole,
I thank the God I know to be
For Christ the conqueror of my soul.*

*Since His the sway of circumstance,
I would not wince nor cry aloud.
Under that rule which men call chance
My head with joy is humbly bowed.*

*Beyond this place of sin and tears
That life with Him! And His the aid,
Despite the menace of the years,
Keeps, and shall keep me, unafraid.*

*I have no fear, though straight the gate,
He cleared from punishment the scroll.
Christ is the Master of my fate,
Christ is the Captain of my soul.*

In life we have the choice to captain our own ship or surrender to the Captain of our soul. Our choices have both temporal and eternal consequences.

Two paths. Two choices. Two consequences.