

Welcome!

A warm welcome to each one of you this morning! I am glad you decided to join me as we examine another significant promise which God has made to us. Without this treasured gift, we would be left to walk through life in the darkness of our own thoughts and with the false hope that our decisions will lead us to an abundant life.

"I Will Give Wisdom to You"





Imagine that you came across a book of advice and learned it contained over 2,500 quotations from some of the most famous men and women who have ever lived – people of wisdom and experience from the past and the present. Would you read it? What would you expect to gain?

I actually have this book in my library. Pulitzer Prize-winning political and former language columnist for the *New York Times*, William Safire (1929-2009) and his brother, Leonard Safire, compiled these quotations and published them in 1989. One of the famous people they quoted was humorist Mark Twain, who offered the following advice: "*Let us endeavor to live that when we come to die even the undertaker will be sorry.*" Translation: Live in such a way that others will miss you.



The advice industry has been thriving for centuries, offering counsel and direction to anyone who would follow their ideas about meaning, success, and the good life. Even Safire recognized what has been taking place:

"The creeping commercialization of counsel has led to a sonic boom within the advice industry. If the advice explosion continues, we will become a nation of sheep-like advisees, hooked on direction by consultants, traumatized by the admonitions of moralizers, cowed by the expertise of specialists, bulldozed by the authority of pundits, inundated by the wave of detailed instructions pounded in by the vast how-to hierarchy."

The first question that should be asked of these advice-givers is, "How do you know how to live?" A second one would follow: "Is your advice normative for all people at all times and, if so, upon what grounds should it be followed?" And a third, "How do you know this is true?"

If man is the measure of all things (Protagoras), denies absolute truth, and lives to satisfy his own desires and sensibilities during his brief journey through life, on what ground does the advice-giving culture stand when it confidently calls others to follow its precepts, values, and counsel? If there is no truth nor do transcendental values exist in the universe, how could we ever know which counselor's opinion is right?



These questions and thoughts lead us to ask about an important word which Safire uses in the title of his book: Words of Wisdom. Note that the title is not, Random Thoughts About Things Which May Be Helpful in Your Life. The authors are claiming to present wisdom and includes the following by English conductor Sir Thomas Beecham: "Try everything once except incest and folk-dancing." And another from the world-famous Swedish film director, Ingmar Bergman: "You must train your intuition — you must trust that small voice inside you which tells you exactly what to say, what to decide."

Twenty-five hundred quotes like this. Isn't there a more certain way?

Scripture Presents Two Kinds of Wisdom

- Earthly Wisdom: "Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic" (James 3:13-15).
- "And Moses was educated in all the learning (*sofia* = wisdom) of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds" (Acts 7:22).
- "...the world through its wisdom did not come to know God" (I Cor. 1:21).

God's Wisdom

- "But if any of you lacks **wisdom**, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5).
- "Oh the depths of the riches both of the **wisdom** and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!" (Rom. 11:33).
- "The foolishness of God is **wiser** than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (I Cor. 1:25).
- "With God are **wisdom** and might; he has counsel and understanding" (Job 12:13).

God's Wisdom

- "The **wisdom** from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17).
- "We speak God's **wisdom** in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the **wisdom** which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (I Cor. 2:7-8).
- "...making mention of you in my prayers; 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" (Eph. 1:16-17).



Divine Versus Human Wisdom

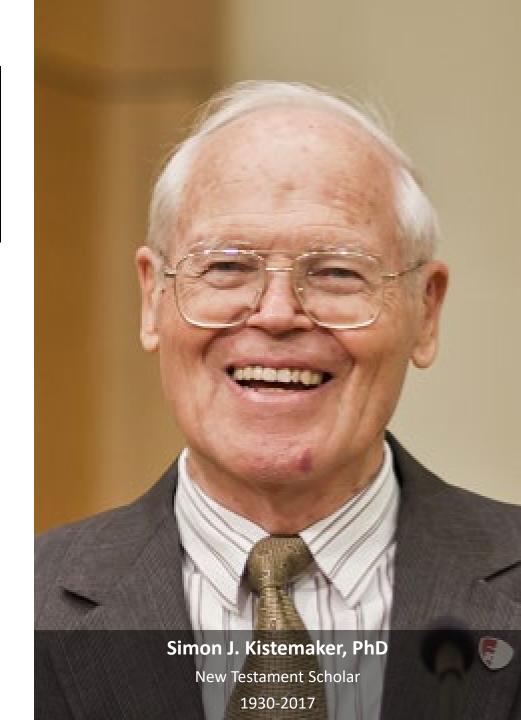
- "Divine wisdom is the standard by which all human wisdom is to be measured and evaluated."
- "Much human wisdom may be considered folly in the light of divine wisdom."
- "God gives and determines the measure of wisdom one receives and can practice."





Overcoming Our Independence

"By nature man is independent. He wants to solve his own problems and make his own decisions....Man has to overcome pride to admit that he needs wisdom. But wisdom is not something he possesses. Wisdom belongs to God, for it is his divine virtue. Anyone who admits the need for wisdom must go to God and ask him....The believer must ask God for wisdom."





What Is Wisdom?

- Wisdom, n., "capacity of judging rightly in matters relating to life and conduct; soundness of judgment in the choice of means and ends; sometimes, less strictly, sound sense, esp. in practical affairs, as opposed to *folly* (OED).
- **Wisdom** is a virtue that is both intellectual and ethical. "Wisdom is a form of knowledge that penetrates to the deeper significance of things and therefore enables us to apply that knowledge to practical situations. Scripture often represents it as a skill, a knowing *how*, rather than knowing *that*....Specifically, wisdom is the ability to do the right thing in difficult situations..." (John Frame).



What Is Wisdom?

- "Wisdom is closely related to prudence, knowledge and reflection, and in this sense it is best understood as the practical wisdom which is on top of life in all relations and situations" (Kittel). "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion" (Prov. 8:12).
- "In Scripture, wisdom is a moral as well as an intellectual quality, more than mere intelligence or knowledge, just as it is more than mere cleverness or cunning. To be truly wise, in the Bible sense, one's intelligence and cleverness must be harnessed to a right end. Wisdom is the power to see, and the inclination to choose, the best and highest goal, together with the surest means of attaining it" (J.I. Packer).

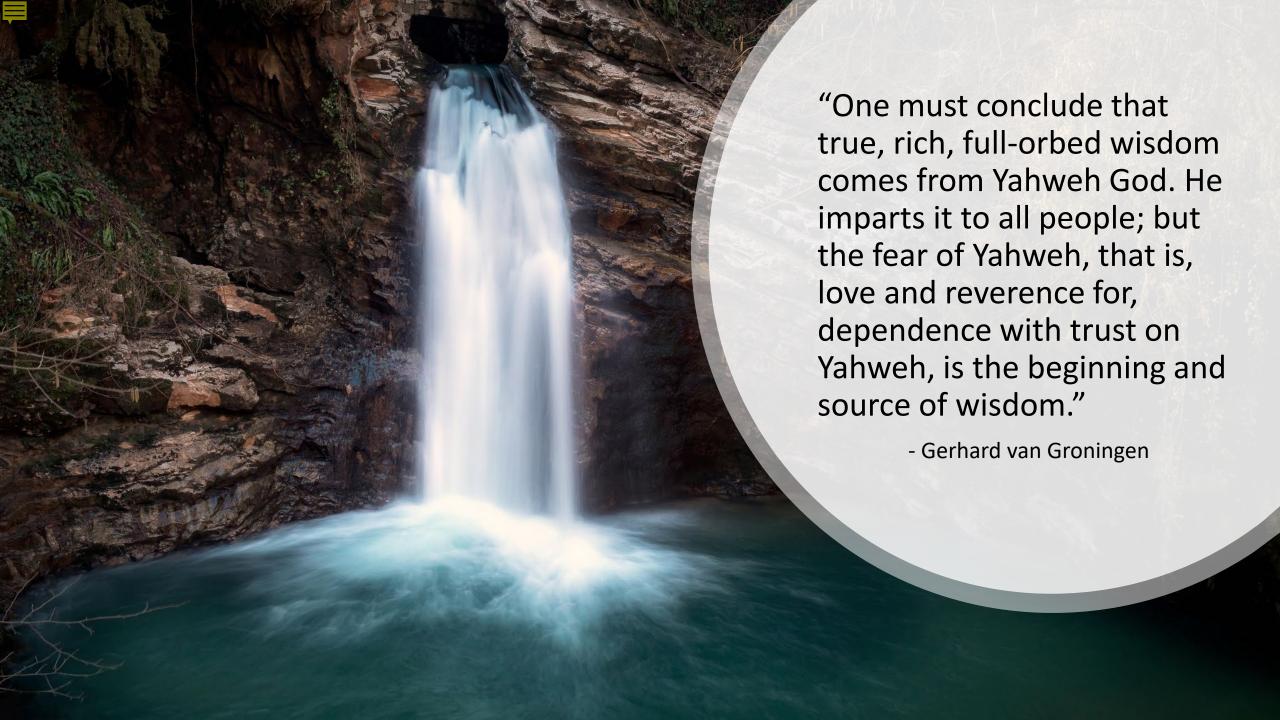


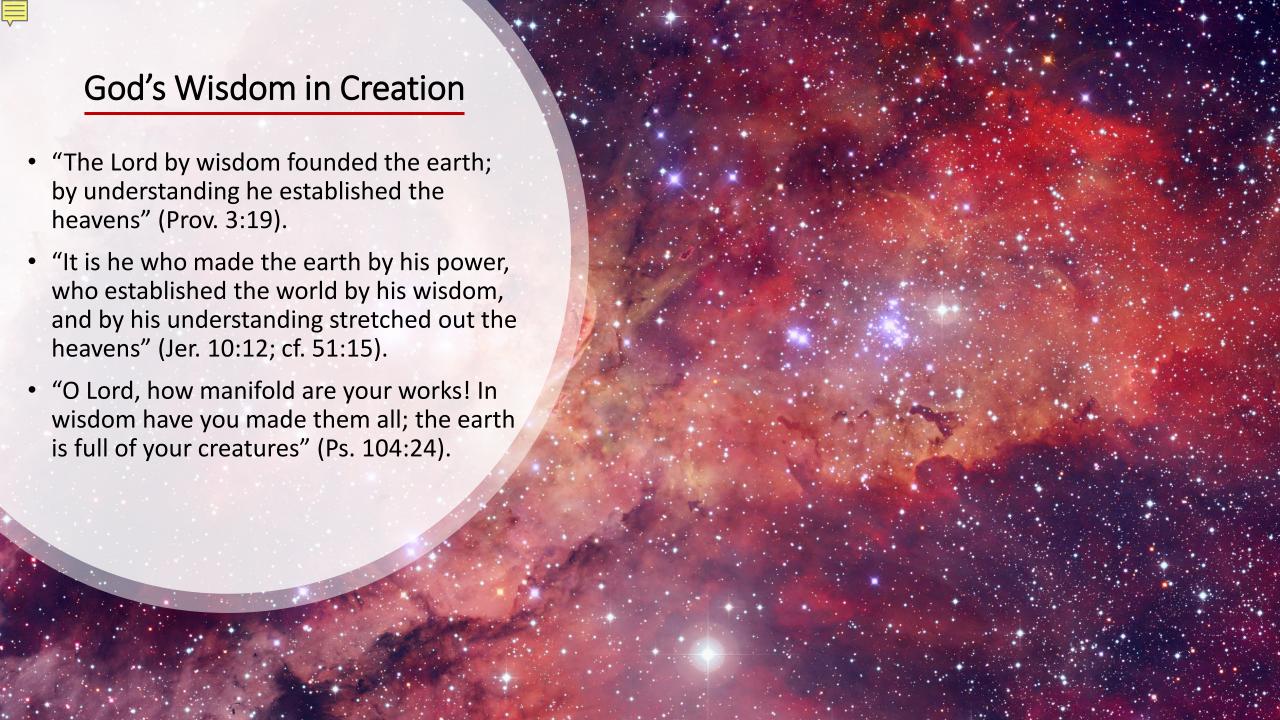
The Ultimate Source of Wisdom

- "The Scriptures make abundantly clear that Yahweh God is the source of all wisdom" (Gerhard van Groningen).
- "And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice" (I Kgs. 3:28).
- "And the Lord gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him" (I Kgs. 5:12).
- "But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?....And he said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding" (Job 28:12,28).

The Ultimate Source of Wisdom

- "Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart" (Ps. 51:6).
- "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!" (Ps. 111:10).
- "For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding" (Prov. 2:6).
- "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight" (Prov. 9:10).





The Wisdom of Jesus

- "And coming to His home town He began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they became astonished, and said, 'Where did this man get this **wisdom**, and these miraculous powers?" (Mt. 13:54; cf. Mk. 6:2).
- "And the Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him" (Lk. 2:40).
- "And Jesus kept increasing in **wisdom** and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Lk. 2:52).
- "But to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the **wisdom** of God" (I Cor. 1:24).

God's PROMISE to Give Wisdom

"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials; knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:2-8).



Solomon Asks for Wisdom

God said to Solomon, "Ask what I shall give you" (I Kgs. 3:5). Solomon responded: "O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?" (I Kgs. 3:7-9).





God Gives Solomon Wisdom

- "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations....And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom" (I Kgs. 4:29-31,34).
- "Solomon's wisdom was a gift of Yahweh God" (van Groningen).



The Range of Solomon's Wisdom

"What was the range of Solomon's wisdom? Reference has been made to his application of wisdom in governing, executing justice, administering the general affairs of the government, and developing and enriching international relationships. It is of more than passing interest that Solomon knew, understood, and spoke about natural creational aspects of life. He spoke of plant life – from huge trees (the cedars of Lebanon) to fine, tender growths nurtured in the cracks of walls. In his proverbs he spoke of different kinds of creatures, animals, birds, reptiles, and fish....Laws in nature and seasonal characteristics claimed his attention. Solomon demonstrated that he was an active covenant man – active in creational covenantal areas as well as fulfilling Yahweh's promises to David."



The Person Who Has Wisdom

- Is able to see the patterns and laws God implanted in His creation.
- Is able to observe the conformity of the cosmos to the will of God and sees God's wisdom and righteousness in everything He made.
- Is able to see how every part of God's creation fulfills His commands.
- Is able to discern how the cosmic kingdom fulfills God's purposes for it in regard to His wisdom.

How Do We Find Wisdom?

- "From where, then, does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding?....God understands the way to it, and he knows its place....Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding" (Job 28:20,23,28).
- "For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity; guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul" (Prov. 2:6-10).



Two Prerequisites

- We must reverence God: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding" (Ps. 111:10). "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight" (Prov. 9:10). "Not till we have become humble and teachable, standing in awe of God's holiness and sovereignty, acknowledging our own littleness, distrusting our own thoughts, and willing to have our minds turned upside down, can divine wisdom become ours" (J.I. Packer).
- We must learn to receive God's Word. "Wisdom is divinely wrought in those, and those only, who apply themselves to God's revelation" (Packer).



I. The First Principle: Scripture Is the Fear of God

A. To know Him personally through Scriptural revelation

Through creational revelation which reveals the wisdom of God

Through reflection – meditation – prayer – fellowship

Meaning – factual knowledge

Love God

Live in and with God in Christ

B. To trust Him

Fully assured regarding God

Fully committed to God

Fully surrendered

Spirit-filled and led



C. To obey Him

To listen

To follow

To be assured His way is the best way

D. To serve Him

To recognize God as sovereign Lord

To recognize the will of God as the highest good

To worship Him

To work – slave – for Him

II. The Supporting Principle is To Have and Exercise Discernment

A. In regard to God's Word: refers to a constant effort for entering into it in its entirety, to evaluate, to relate, to see the parts and each part in relation to the whole.



In regard to life

To know life

To be open to a knowledge of all aspects of created reality

To be aware of the complexity of life, seeing the unity as well as variety

To study – read, widely apprehend as much as one can

To observe how the Lord directs all aspects of creation

Consider how a plant functions, an ant works and so on

To understand, see into, see through, human nature

Self first

Humanity in general

Calls for specific and wide knowledge (in addition to what was said above)

Of psychology and sociology

To evaluate – weigh factors independently and collectively

Determine relative as well as integral value of various facets

Be sure you have a divinely given/sanctioned set of value standards



III. The Co-ordinating Principle Is To Practice, Exercise, Demonstrate Wisdom

- A. The necessity of "gifts" and "talents" to be recognized and the diversity in Distribution. But, all people, as a rule, have some enough to be wise to a great extent.
- B. The necessity of time for gathering facts, discerning, evaluating, relating (Fools rush in)
- C. The necessity of appreciation for the good, the proper
- D. The necessity of a repulsion for the evil, the wasteful, the disastrous
- E. The necessity of being open to guidance, advice, admonition, encouragement, sharing.
- F. The necessity of maintaining the proper rapport and balance between goals (whereto?) and means (how?), between time (when?) and the place (where?) and above all between persons (who?) and things (what?).

"And now, O sons, listen to me: blessed are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord, but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death."

- Proverbs 8:32-36