

How Do You Know If You Are Wise?

Proverbs 1

Are you a wise person?

How would you know if you are wise?

Who do you know that you would consider wise?

Why do you consider them wise?

What Does The Bible Say?

These are the proverbs of Solomon, David's son, king of Israel.

2 Their purpose is to teach people wisdom and discipline, to help them understand the insights of the wise. 3 Their purpose is to teach people to live disciplined and successful lives, to help them do what is right, just, and fair. (Proverbs 1:1–3 NLT)

Becoming wiser allows you to do what is right, just, and fair.

4 These proverbs will give insight to the simple, knowledge and discernment to the young. 5 Let the wise listen to these proverbs and become even wiser. Let those with understanding receive guidance 6 by exploring the meaning in these proverbs and parables, the words of the wise and their riddles. 7 Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. (Proverbs 1:1–7 NLT)

Fear of the Lord is a healthy respect for God.

15 My child, don't go along with them! Stay far away from their paths. (Proverbs 1:15 NLT)

Wisdom means you stay far away from temptation.

13 If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. (James 3:13 NLT)

17 But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full

of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. (James 3:17 NLT)

Your actions display wisdom. You become more humble, gentle, putting others first, and merciful.

You can be smart and make poor decisions.

How Can You Obey?

Four steps to becoming wise:

Follow Jesus.

24 But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:24 NLT)

Ask God for wisdom.

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. (James 1:5 NLT)

Listen to instructions.

1 A wise child accepts a parent's discipline; a mocker refuses to listen to correction. (Proverbs 13:1 NLT)

Hang around, wise people.

Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble. (Proverbs 13:20 NLT)

So how do you know if you are wise? First, you look to God for wisdom, and second, your behavior changes.

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Additional Notes:

This week's Talking Theology is from Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in Stone: The Ten Commandments and Today's Moral Crisis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 38.

Explore:

Proverbs are sayings which distil God's truth for everyday life. They are usually brief, always perceptive and often amusing. They are essential advice for good living. Above all, they introduce wisdom as the perfect companion—attractive, liberating, constant and delightful.

God's truth is true for the whole of life, whoever we are and wherever we live. The Proverbs show how God's truth applies to our everyday situations—at home and at work; in marriage and family; in government and commerce; and in the heart attitudes which shape our reactions, lifestyles and habits. In all these areas, the Proverbs light the way to life and post hazard signs on every road to ruin.

Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide*, 1st Augsburg books ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 247.

Explore:

A proverb is a pithy statement of wisdom, often worded in a clever way to make it easy to remember. Most of the proverbs consist of two clauses, presenting either similarities or contrasts.

There are several varieties of proverbs, as will be seen from the following:

1. Some are single statements, expressing a simple fact:

When a man's ways please the Lord,

He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him (16:7).

2. Some consist of two clauses or phrases, in which one thing is compared to another:

As cold water to a weary soul,

So is good news from a far country (25:25).

3. Still others have two clauses or phrases, usually connected by but, and describing things that are opposite to each other:

The memory of the righteous is blessed,

But the name of the wicked will rot (10:7).

This type of proverb is found mostly in Chapters 10–15.

4. There are proverbs with two clauses or phrases in which the same thought is repeated in a slightly different way:

For a harlot is a deep pit,

And a seductress is a narrow well (23:27).

William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 787–788.

Explore:

How could Solomon's writings be part of the Scripture since 1 Kings 11:6 said Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord?

Problem: Solomon began his reign as a man who loved the Lord (1 Kings 3:3). Later in his life he began to turn away from following the Lord and did that which was evil in God's sight. How can the writings of an evil man become Scripture?

Solution: The reason any book is in the Bible is not based upon the life of the human author, but on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16, cf. 2 Peter 1:20–21). Every human author was a sinful human being. It is by the grace of God that humans were used to communicate God's revelation. Solomon asked God for the capacity to judge Israel and to "discern between good and evil" (1 Kings 3:9). Solomon's writings are in the Bible because God supernaturally spoke to him (1 Kings 3:10–15) and gave him wisdom to share with others. In short, he was a prophet or mouthpiece through whom God spoke, imperfect though he was.

Norman L. Geisler and Thomas A. Howe, *When Critics Ask : A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1992), 245.

Explore:

Proverbs 1:1-7

Solomon received great wisdom from God (1 Kings 4:29). He authored and gathered a huge collection of proverbs, which we know as the book of Proverbs (verse 1). Along with proverbs we also find parables and other sayings. Solomon's interest was practical: he intended them to help readers gain wisdom and instruction for the purpose of shaping a life of discipline and prudence, doing what is right (verses 2-3). He felt that the proverbs would be helpful to the wise as well as the unwise (verses 4-6).

Explore:

Data is just raw information: $2+2=4$; water freezes at 32° F;

Pearl Harbor was attacked on December 7, 1941. Information is data that we have arranged in a meaningful way. With the

examples above, we might expand into math for everyday use or

business. We could explore other natural phenomena, such as

what else happens when water freezes in the natural world. Or

we could branch out into the whole of World War II. Knowledge

refers to having a grasp on the information available to us. We

learn about history, math, and so on, and retain (we hope!)

important knowledge from those disciplines. Wisdom builds on

top of knowledge. Leaders may know much about war in history,

yet act foolishly in ways that bring about even more wars. A man

may be able to converse, charmingly, about many things.

Without wisdom, however, he may become a showoff, or even a

treacherous manipulator. Wisdom is not an academic subject we

can learn. Wisdom involves skill in living. As with all skills, it

takes practice. We can learn about baseball from books, but we will never learn baseball without playing or attending actual baseball games. We can learn about cooking from books, but it takes time and experience to actually learn to cook. Biblical wisdom is not a quick microwave recipe. We can grow in it for an entire lifetime without coming close to full wisdom.

Explore:

It is important to understand the biblical meaning of the fear of the Lord. Adam and Eve feared God in the garden after they sinned, so they hid from Him. They were afraid of some kind of punishment. The fear of the Lord, however, extends much further than being afraid of God's anger or punishment. It involves a healthy respect that leads to making choices in life that reflect His existence, character, and commands. Yes, we fail before God in countless ways. Yet, our healthy respect for Him

should not lead us to cower in fear waiting for the axe to fall. Rather, it should induce us to respond gratefully, joyfully, and obediently to the message of His grace and forgiveness. Then it should guide us into living wisely, that is, according to His precepts. We should educate our children about how people build houses and buildings according to certain patterns and guidelines. Then, we can use that as a bridge to discussing how we are all building our lives, and should acknowledge the God-given patterns and guidelines we need to follow for a good life.

Explore:

Proverbs 1:8-19

Solomon then addressed his son. Did he have a specific son in mind, or did he intend his advice for all those who came after him? It was common in wisdom literature from that time period (both the Proverbs, and nonbiblical writings) to structure advice

in this manner. We can easily imagine ourselves as the recipients of this wise, godly, parental advice (verse 8). Living according to this teaching will make our lives more appealing, and even make them stand out. That is what garland and chains (decorative accessories and jewelry) do (verse 9).

The first piece of advice concerns relationships with those who would lead us astray (verses 10-19). These people make plans for evil. They have no concern for what happens to their victims, but focus only on the plunder they hope to seize. They promise to share everything.

Some people, as in this case, talk openly and blatantly about their wickedness. However, it is more frequent that they dress it up in more acceptable language. The wise will know how to look below the surface to perceive the reality of wickedness at its core.

Solomon recognized that sin and bloodshed accompanied such people. He further recognized, as indeed a wise person will, that their affairs do not end well. Can such wicked people achieve the gain they seek? Certainly—but only temporarily! Verse 19 tells us it is ill-gotten gain. The wicked want to entice fools to come along with them, using the gain as bait. The wise person looks beyond the gain to the destruction it brings in its wake. Wicked people of this sort are not merely bad associates—they are dangerous! The wise will avoid danger, and the people who spread it. If a clean sock is sealed up in a plastic bag with some dirty, smelly clothing, the dirt and odor will rub off on the clean sock. So it is if we are too close with those who oppose God. Their rebellion will rub off onto us. This is a great lesson to share with the generations to come.

Explore:

When Osama bin Laden was killed, many rejoiced. Others, however, objected, saying that people in general (and Christians in particular) should never rejoice in the calamity of another. Indeed, Christ instructs us to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44), and God certainly loved us before we were friends of His (Romans 5:8). God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11; 2 Peter 3:9). God loves all people and desires that all be saved and enjoy His blessings, but He also eventually brings His wrath and judgment on those who refuse to turn to Him.

He understands there is an ironic justice at work when calamity falls on those who have resolutely refused to listen to God.

Remember, in Proverbs, we are dealing with practical reality, not the world of Mr. Rogers or Sesame Street, in which everyone will get along by the end of the show. We must remember the nature of the relationship between the unbeliever and God: mocking receives mocking; refusal receives refusal; rejection

receives rejection. We need to strengthen the next generation's understanding of God and judgment. He does not wait, lurking in the shadows, ready to pounce on us when we slip or fall. He waits for us to repent. He longs to be able to respond to faith and repentance, to restore us to fellowship with Him. Nevertheless, the time to repent will someday end. We dare not take it for granted!

Explore:

Proverbs 1:20-33

To personify Wisdom is very common in wisdom literature, both biblical and secular. Notice where she (Wisdom) calls out to those who need her: in the street, in the public squares, and in the gateways of the city (verses 20-21). These are the places where public life occurs. They were places of public

commerce, legal justice, and employment. In other words, wisdom is not a religious concept intended only for the sheltered confines of church worship or private devotions. Wisdom speaks out to us where we live and work and expects to change how we live and work.

The questions of verse 22 indicate that wisdom had been available, within reach, and for some time. Wisdom addressed three kinds of people: the simple, the mockers, and the fools.

These terms are distinct, and they appear often in Proverbs. The simple are ignorant, and contrary to the popular saying, ignorance is not bliss! Mockers, on the other hand may be quite clever. They are defiant, often cynical, proudly denigrating the ways of wisdom and puffing up their own image. Fools are morally insensitive, to say the least. They act as though their actions have no real consequences.

Wisdom is not some hidden knowledge, available only to experts. Indeed, God would have been eager to pour out His

heart and thoughts to them—if only they had been receptive (verse 23). They refused to receive God’s wisdom, and will suffer the results of their own stupidity, mockery, and foolishness (verse 24). They laughed at and mocked God’s advice; therefore Wisdom will mock their calamity. They did not accept God’s rebuke; Wisdom will not answer them in their distress (verses 25-30).

Is Wisdom unfair in this stance? Not at all! These people worked very hard for this distress, and no one should deprive them of what they have worked so hard for (verses 31-32). Fools build their own destruction, without fail. Yet, God’s wisdom enables us to live in safety, at ease, and with no fear of harm (verse 33).

Question 1 of 5

How many of the Ten Commandments can you list (without peeking!)?

Question 2 of 5

What does the prologue “I am the Lord your God” tell us about God and his relationship with his people?

Question 3 of 5

What does it mean to have a healthy fear of God?

Question 4 of 5

What might it look like for a believer to pursue wisdom?

Question 5 of 5

Should we avoid all interaction with the unbelievers around us?

Explain your answer.