

The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, To discern the sayings of understanding, To receive instruction in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity; To give prudence to the naïve, To the youth knowledge and discretion, A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel, To understand a proverb and a figure, The words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 1:1-7

What is Wisdom?

A Study of Proverbs: Proverbs 1:1-7

Science is organized knowledge. Wisdom is organized life. – Immanuel Kant

Wisdom.

Some see it as a religious guru who sits in solitude, seeking to understand the mysteries of life.

Others see it in their grandfather, who always seems to know the right answer.

Still others think they find it on a small piece of paper found in a cookie.

How would you define wisdom?

What are some "proverbs" passed down in your family?

"Don't eat yellow snow." Now that is a good thing to teach children. A proverb meant to help make wise decisions. I am sure all of us have had proverbs passed down in some way. Sometimes we heed the warning or advice and other times we may just shrug it off as something that does not apply.

Have you had a time when you should have listened to wisdom passed down?

Hindsight is often 20/20. "If I could just do it all over again" or "if I knew then what I know now" are some things I have caught myself saying. If only I had listened.

Of course, there is the flip side that you can learn from your experi-

“To know wisdom
and instruction...”

Proverbs 1:2

ences. Quite frankly, there are some things I wish I could have learned without experiencing it.

Hence, the reason for Proverbs.

In the opening verses of Proverbs, we are given the whole reason for proverbs – to be wise. But what is wisdom?

These first seven verses give us a definition of wisdom. There are ten words that can describe one who is wise. Let’s look at them to see what Proverbs is all about.

Wisdom (vs 2)

The Hebrew understanding of this word is the ability to use knowledge rightly and it appears thirty-seven times in this book. Think about this a little.

Do you know someone who is extremely smart, but makes poor decisions?

Do you know someone that does well in school, but struggles at life?

Knowledge is one thing, but wisdom is a whole other thing. A man can attain knowledge and continue to learn and expand his intellect, but fail miserably in life. It is because he knows a lot, but knows little about how to apply “a lot”.

Instruction (vs 2)

This word occurs twenty-six times and means discipline or chastening. It carries the idea of teaching through discipline. Now this is not simply punishment although it includes it. Compare a person that tries something once and abandons it with someone who sticks to it and succeeds.

Do you know someone who continues to make the same mistakes despite the negative results?

It is a person lacking instruction.

“...To discern the sayings of **understanding**, To receive instruction in wise behavior, **Righteousness**, **justice**, and **equity**.”

Proverbs 1:2-3

Discernment (vs 2)

Discernment is intelligence. It goes farther than knowledge. It is taking the knowledge one has and using it to apply to an area where there may not be as much knowledge. This is the person who knows what to do even though they have never done it.

How would you describe someone with discernment?

Understanding (vs 2)

This is an interesting word that in some ways flies in the face of experience. So often we are tempted to say that experience is the best teacher. Proverbs would tend to disagree with that idea. The word understanding has the idea of learning from someone else's mistakes or mishaps. It carries with it a sense of bereavement.

Essentially, it is better to learn from someone else's foolishness, than to learn it from your own.

We do this whether we realize it or not. Have you ever said:

“I will know not to make that mistake”

“I am glad it was him and not me.”

“Now I know what not to do”

It is learning from someone else's mistakes. It is seeing what happened and the trying not to repeat it.

Righteousness (vs 3)

This is right behavior or acting in a way that you know to be right. Simply put – obedience.

Judgment (vs 3)

How would you describe someone with good judgment?

This is a legal term and has to do with trying things as in a legal case. It is the ability to make measured decisions based on the facts. This is the person that is able to take principles and insights and use them to make well measured decisions.

Equity (vs 3)

This is a word that speaks to right thinking rather than right living. This is not to say that right living is bad, but right living without right thinking is, unfortunately, legalistic. Wisdom then is not hypocritical.

Prudence (vs 4)

Matthew 10:16 says, "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves." Jesus calls the believers to be as wise as serpents. It is the idea of having awareness or a sense of what is going on. It is "reading between the lines".

Knowledge (vs 4)

Here is a word that many of us are familiar with, but it is not simply knowledge as in information, but sound facts. This is tested information.

Discretion (vs 4)

This word sounds like it jumped out of a movie filled with secrets and mystery. It means to have a plot or plan in mind. It is thinking ahead and planning.

So Proverbs starts off with describing wisdom through these ten words. It gives us a sense or picture of the whole idea of wisdom, but it does not stop there. Proverbs says, "This is what wisdom is", but then it also says Who wisdom begins with.

Read Proverbs 1:6-7.

Why is the fear of wisdom, the beginning of knowledge?

"To understand a proverb and a figure,
The words of the wise
and their riddles.
The fear of the LORD
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struction.

Proverbs 1: 6-7

What would happen if we do not start with God?

Here is what it boils down to. If wisdom does not start with the Creator, then wisdom is found in something created. Wisdom then potentially changes depending on the person or situation.

When it originates with God, then wisdom is above human manipulation and will stand in any situation. We need wisdom to begin with God.

It is a fear of God that is the starting point. This fear is recognition that God is God and we are not. Hence, on the journey to wisdom starts with need.

I need God. Are you ready to start?

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

