

“Knowledge is good to have, but ...not an automatic for wisdom.”

The Origin of Wisdom

A Study of Proverbs: Proverbs 2-3

“Wisdom is what’s left after we’ve run out of personal opinions.”
– Cullen Hightower

But let’s not get ahead of ourselves.

Does wisdom come naturally?

We would like to think it comes naturally. You know, with experience. Some say the greatest teacher is experience, but Proverbs opens up with defining wisdom and it says that it is better to learn something from someone else’s experience. It is the idea of not making the same mistake that someone else did.

If wisdom did come naturally, where would it come from?

If we are really honest with ourselves, we would find that wisdom does not come naturally. In fact, there is nothing natural about it. Think about it. What if wisdom comes from parents? Where would that leave those without parents or those with struggling parents? Or what if wisdom came from experience? What about those who are not given the same experiences as others? Maybe knowledge? Knowledge is good to have, but people have proven that knowledge is not an automatic for wisdom.

Smart people do foolish things.

How would you define perfect wisdom?

It is a hard question to answer if we take out the parental, experiential, and knowledge factors. In fact, you would need to exclude anything that could be biased or one-sided. In order to have perfect wisdom, we would need a perfect source of wisdom. Wisdom would need to be completely outside of human creation because wisdom from a person is tainted with bias and self-centeredness.

"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. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

-James 3:13-18

Perfect wisdom needs to be unbiased and untainted by selfish motives and desires. It needs to stand above man's thoughts and experiences. Wisdom needs to come from God.

Read James 3:13-18.

This is a chapter that is commonly referenced as a chapter about controlling the tongue. The first verse puts the chapter in context. James is addressing teachers. The two things that a teacher uses are his or her tongue and his or her wisdom. These are the tools of the trade.

How does this passage describe tainted wisdom?

Now how does it describe wisdom from above?

Hands down, we would want the wisdom from above. We would want this wisdom to be pure and unwavering. We would want it to be without hypocrisy. But notice the "other" kind of wisdom. It is jealous and self-serving.

This wisdom comes from earthly, natural, and demonic sources. Did you catch that? Read verse fifteen again.

Natural wisdom and earthly wisdom is just as useless as demonic wisdom. Ouch!

So - two cents worth is really not even worth that!

Here is what we are left with: wisdom from above or "earthly, natural, demonic" wisdom.

Proverbs 2-3 understands this. It starts out with an "if . . . then" cause. The first four verses give us the "if" and the next six verses give us the "then". There's a choice. It seems there is no middle ground.

Why does there have to be a choice? Why not have a "middle ground"?

It would seem that if we choose wisdom and treasure the commands of God, if we fear the Lord, then we will be given wisdom.

“Paul tells us that we are in a battle and encourages us to wear the armor of God.”

There really is no middle ground. Some would think that we can “ride the fence” or take a middle position when it comes to following God or following self. Paul tells us that we are in a battle and encourages us to wear the armor of God. Think of the old war movies. There is one army on one side and another army on another side. They are ready for battle and equipped. You are asked to take a side. Would you want to take middle ground?

Middle ground is the last place I would want to be.

Proverbs goes on to explain that wisdom will deliver us from the crooked man and the strange woman.

The crooked man is the one who is self-serving, the one who is trying to gain for his own benefit no matter the cost. Verse fourteen describes him as enjoying evil and rejoicing at others downfalls.

The strange woman is the one who is manipulation and also seeking self-gratification. She tries to seduce and sweet talk to get what she wants.

Both kinds of people are all about him or herself and care nothing about others. Wisdom on the other hand has nothing to do with self. The search for true wisdom will lead us to God.

Devotion to God and devotion to wisdom are inseparable. It is God that is the origin of wisdom. He is the source and the foundation of wisdom. He is the only unbiased, untainted being that can provide clear and perfect wisdom.

Therefore, we must submit to God before we can come to know wisdom.

Why is it so hard to submit or surrender to God at times?

It is difficult to submit or surrender to God or really to anyone else for that matter. The world would try to convince us that we need to be independent. We should not have to rely on anyone. Unfortunately, this is not true. We are not and will never be independent. We need oxygen to breathe. We need food and water. We need.

Our submission to God shows our admission of need. The first step in wisdom is the willingness to admit that we are in need.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.”

-Proverbs 3:5-7

Proverbs 3:5-7 explain this. Take a moment to read these verses. We must trust in the Lord and not in our own selves. In fact, we cannot hope to be wise until we recognize God as the author. It starts with being devoted to God.

It starts admitting your need.

Are you independent?

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

