

Lesson 5 | October 4, 2020

Wisdom From God

Study Text: Job 28:1–28; Psalm 1:1–6; Proverbs 2:1–6; 3:1–18; 9:10; Ecclesiastes 7:11–12; 12:9–14

Central Truth: Reverence for God is the beginning of true wisdom.

Key Verse: Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding (KJV).

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding (NIV).

Learning Objective

- Understand the nature and message of Old Testament wisdom.
- Realize that a deeper knowledge of God can bring a closer relationship with Him, which in turn leads the believer into true wisdom.
- Examine students' relationship with God, praying that He will reveal any areas where they need to grow in and practice true, godly wisdom.

Introducing the Lesson

Say: Sometimes, as we walk through the Christian life, it is easy to fall into the trap of “going through the motions.” In such times, it is important to revisit the words of Scripture regarding what it means to truly know God. The wisdom literature of the Old Testament provides some valuable reminders and practical instruction. Today’s lesson reminds us that as we experience a fresh, life-changing encounter with God, true wisdom should naturally follow.

Opening Activity—Wise People

Draw two columns on the board in your classroom. Then ask your students to name a wise person they know or have known and why they chose to mention that person. List the people and the wise characteristics on the board. Look for commonality among the characteristics of wisdom, and compare what you learn in the lesson with those characteristics.

Say: What is wisdom? It depends on whom you ask. In today’s world there are many messages in various forms of media that seek to tell you how to make wise decisions. Most of these messages present wisdom framed in a twenty-first century concept of success and comfort. But true, biblical wisdom is rooted in a vibrant relationship with God based on a true knowledge of

Him. This knowledge should change the way we think, act, and live, and change us from the inside out. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Job 28:1–11 sets the stage for the lesson by describing the difficulty of mining valuable metals and gems in ancient times. Treasures such as gold, silver, and gemstones were so desirable that men found a way to seek them in the depths of the earth. Verse 4 is especially descriptive in reminding us that human ingenuity was at work even in the days of Scripture.

Our lesson compares the value of wisdom with the treasures painstakingly mined from the earth. True, godly wisdom cannot be obtained through human means.

Part 1—Source of True Wisdom

Wisdom Is Worth Seeking

Job 28:12–22

[Job 28:1-28 KJV] 1 Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold [where] they fine [it]. 2 Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass [is] molten [out of] the stone. 3 He setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death. 4 The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant; [even the waters] forgotten of the foot: they are dried up, they are gone away from men. 5 [As for] the earth, out of it cometh bread: and under it is turned up as it were fire. 6 The stones of it [are] the place of sapphires: and it hath dust of gold. 7 [There is] a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen: 8 The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it. 9 He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots. 10 He cutteth out rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing. 11 He bindeth the floods from overflowing; and [the thing that is] hid bringeth he forth to light. **12 But where shall wisdom be found? and where [is] the place of understanding? 13 Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. 14 The depth saith, It [is] not in me: and the sea saith, [It is] not with me. 15 It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed [for] the price thereof. 16 It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. 17 The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it [shall not be for] jewels of fine gold. 18 No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom [is] above rubies. 19 The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. 20 Whence then cometh wisdom? and where [is] the place of understanding? 21 Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air.**

22 Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears.

Say: Many people spend their time seeking wealth. If they can just have their bank accounts at a certain level, they will feel secure. Others look for positions of power in their jobs or recognition and fame for their accomplishments. Some seek higher degrees, believing that more knowledge will bring fulfillment. But God places a high value on wisdom, which is vastly different from wealth, power, fame, or knowledge. True wisdom is worth seeking, and it can come only from God, who is the Source of wisdom. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In Bible times, great value was placed on wisdom, even outside of Scripture. Documents from Egypt and Mesopotamia extol the virtue of pursuing wisdom, for it was seen as bringing order. Job 28:12–22 provides godly direction to the innate human desire for wisdom, and it is found partly within the idea of order and purpose. In creation, **God brought order to the universe**. The pursuit of godly wisdom, then, gives us a proper biblical understanding of order within this world. Many of the proverbs tell us how wise living and decision-making will bring order to our lives. If the one who is wise lives righteously, he or she can expect righteous outcomes. The opposite is true as well: Foolish living leads to sorrow and disaster.

Job 28 reminds us that the source of true wisdom—the order by which all creation operates—cannot be found in this earth. It does not originate with humanity, nor can it be bought at any price.

Discuss

? What are some ways worldly wisdom is different from godly wisdom?

? Describe a time when godly wisdom made a difference in your life.

Fearing God Is True Wisdom

Job 28:23–28; Proverbs 2:1–6; 9:10

[Job 28:23-28 KJV] 23 God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. 24 For he looketh to the ends of the earth, [and] seeth under the whole heaven; 25 To make the weight for the winds; and he weigheth the waters by measure. 26 When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder: 27 Then did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out. 28 And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that [is] wisdom; and to depart from evil [is] understanding.

[Pro 2:1-6 KJV] 1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; 2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, [and] apply thine heart to understanding; 3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, [and] liftest up thy voice for understanding; 4 If thou

seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as [for] hid treasures; 5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. 6 For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth [cometh] knowledge and understanding. [Pro 9:10 KJV] 10 The fear of the LORD [is] the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy [is] understanding.

Say: The fear of the Lord is one of the most misunderstood concepts in Scripture, but that fear should be defined through our relationship with God. The fact that the Creator of the universe loves us and made a way to reconcile us to himself ought to lead us to recognize His holiness compared to our unworthiness. One of the best examples of such fear of the Lord is found in Isaiah 6:1–8. Upon recognizing God’s holiness, compared with his own sin, Isaiah was moved to worship and serve God with all his heart. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

[Isa 6:1-8 KJV] 1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. 2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, [is] the LORD of hosts: the whole earth [is] full of his glory. 4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 Then said I, Woe [is] me! for I am undone; because I [am] a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. 6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, [which] he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7 And he laid [it] upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. 8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here [am] I; send me.

Job 28:21–28 contains what is called “synonymous parallelism” in Hebrew poetry. Each verse consists of two lines or thoughts that are essentially saying the same thing. Verses 23–24 answer the question raised in verses 21–22: Only God can see where wisdom dwells. Verses 25–26 further emphasize that wisdom was present in the very act of creation. All of this leads to the conclusion that the fear of the Lord is wisdom.

This principle of fearing God is common in the Book of Proverbs. In 2:1–6 we are reminded that God is the sole Source of true wisdom. Then, in 9:10, we find the familiar statement that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (NIV).

The idea of fearing the Lord can be challenging to understand. The Hebrew noun translated “fear” can mean “terror” in the sense that most understand the word. But when coupled with the word “God” or “Lord” it conveys a strong sense of piety and reverence. As believers, we should have a sense that God is transcendent. He is “wholly other,” meaning that He is not like us, He is far above us, and He is sovereign and powerful over us. The Old Testament contains several examples of God’s people

becoming overwhelmed with self-awareness of sinfulness and uncleanness in the presence of God (c.f., Isaiah 6:1–6).

Believers today, as in Bible times, should sense the “awesomeness” of who God is. Both Proverbs 9 and Job 28 speak of the fear of God as including “understanding.” As we understand who God is, through Scripture as well as a daily walk with Him, we learn what it means to live in fear and reverence of the Lord.

Resource Packet Item 1: My Awesome God

Distribute the work sheet and, as a class, list things that speak of the awesomeness of God. Discuss ways to respond to these as you see them.

Discuss

? How would you describe what it means to fear the Lord? (Encourage students to refer to Scriptures about honoring God and forsaking sin, if possible.)

? Do you think the concept of fearing the Lord is downplayed among Christians today? Explain.

Part 2—Wisdom for Living

Wisdom Brings Spiritual Blessings

Proverbs 3:1–18

[Pro 3:1-18 KJV] 1 My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: 2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. 3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: 4 So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. 5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. 7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. 8 It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. 9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: 10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. 11 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: 12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son [in whom] he delighteth. 13 Happy [is] the man [that] findeth wisdom, and the man [that] getteth understanding. 14 For the merchandise of it [is] better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. 15 She [is] more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. 16 Length of days [is]

in her right hand; [and] in her left hand riches and honour. 17 Her ways [are] ways of pleasantness, and all her paths [are] peace. 18 She [is] a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy [is every one] that retaineth her.

Say: If you are a parent, you have undoubtedly offered advice to your children, even if they are adults. Your advice, whether or not it was heeded, was meant to help your children live happier, more successful lives. As our Heavenly Father, God's instruction to us is always intended to benefit us. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Proverbs 3 provides a "father-to-son" form of communication seen throughout wisdom literature, especially in the Book of Proverbs. Adherence to parental teaching will lead to long life and peace. Verse 3 instructs the son not to let "mercy and truth" leave him (KJV). The word for "mercy" here is *chesed*, the important Hebrew word discussed in Lesson 2 that denotes God's covenant love. This word is often coupled with the word "truth," which indicates that godly wisdom reflects internal character based on love and truth.

The familiar words of verses 5–6 involve a sense of gaining a relational knowledge of God built on trust, which stands in stark contrast to leaning on one's own understanding. Verse 7 elaborates on this by once again reminding us of the call to "fear the Lord," which is evidenced by turning from evil. Such a life is blessed by God and brings honor to Him.

Verses 11–12 dig deeper into this relational aspect of knowing God, as it extols the virtue of accepting His discipline as a sign of His love and concern for His people. It is noteworthy, then, that these verses are followed by a description of wisdom as valuable and precious (similar to the Job passage considered earlier). As we submit to God's instruction and discipline, we can embrace the truth that His wisdom is truly more beneficial than earthly wisdom or riches.

Discuss

? What do you think it means to have a "relational knowledge of God"?

? What are some specific ways godly wisdom can lead to God's blessings?

God's Word Leads Us in Righteous Living

Psalm 1:1–6

[Psa 1:1-6 KJV] 1 Blessed [is] the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2 But his delight [is] in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall

prosper. 4 The ungodly [are] not so: but [are] like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Say: As we grow in our relationship with God and follow His Word, our behavior should change. Much like the psalmist in Psalm 1, Paul contrasted the behavior of those who produce the works of the flesh with that of those who live by the Spirit, in Galatians 5:19–23. Those who love God should be changed by the Spirit and produce the fruit of the Spirit. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Psalm 1 offers another look at how the Bible uses literary methods in wisdom literature. Being able to recognize methods such as parallelism and repetition can help us understand the message of Scripture more clearly when we read Old Testament poetry. Verse 6, for instance, is what some call “antithetic parallelism.” That is, the second thought is the opposite of the first, and therefore the two thoughts stand in stark contrast to one another. Verse 3, however, uses parallel thoughts to elaborate on the initial statement. A tree that is planted by the water (first thought) yields its fruit (second thought), and it does not wither, (third thought). When we read Scripture this way, we are reminded to look at an entire thought as a single message rather than dividing it into two or three distinct messages.

We might also notice that Psalm 1 bears some resemblance to the Beatitudes in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5:3–10). Indeed, some have called the psalm a Beatitude with an explanation. More specifically, it explains what it means for God’s people to live out the instruction of His Word—and also reaffirms the blessings of doing so.

The blessed man constantly meditates on God’s Law, or Torah (Psalm 1:2). This word, Torah, refers to the first five books of the Old Testament and is usually translated “law,” but it can also mean “instruction” or “teaching.” As a result, we can apply this as a reference to the full teaching of the Old Testament. The person who meditates on God’s Law (and thereby puts it into practice) is like a strong tree that produces the good fruit of righteous living.

On the other hand, since God alone is the source of wisdom, those who do not meditate on His Word are classified as “the wicked” (verse 4, NIV). The righteous person has the wisdom necessary to avoid aligning himself with the wicked. In the end, the evidence of one’s wisdom or foolishness is found in the fruit of his or her life.

Resource Packet Item 2: Producing Good Fruit

Distribute the work sheet, and have someone read Galatians 5:16–25. Ask the questions and briefly discuss the answers. If class time is limited, send the sheet home for further study.

Discuss

? Many of us may cross paths with the “wicked” in our daily occupations. How do you find proper balance in your relationships with the unsaved who may be similar to those described in Psalm 1:1?

? How will having a healthy fear of the Lord impact the way you live out the Christian life?

? What do you think it means to delight in the Law of the Lord?

Part 3—Goal of True Wisdom Wisdom Is Greater Than Wealth

Ecclesiastes 7:11–12

[Ecc 7:11-12 KJV] 11 Wisdom [is] good with an inheritance: and [by it there is] profit to them that see the sun. 12 For wisdom [is] a defence, [and] money [is] a defence: but the excellency of knowledge [is, that] wisdom giveth life to them that have it.

Say: In today’s society, concern over money (or the lack of it) often dominates our lives. While we know that many things are more important than money, most people spend a large portion of their waking hours earning money—or spending it. The Bible itself has a great deal to say about wealth, poverty, and the Christian’s response to both. As with most things, God’s Word calls for balance. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Ecclesiastes 7:11–12 gives a vivid contrast between wise living and foolish living, from a godly perspective. Notice, however, that verse 11 doesn’t say that an inheritance is a bad thing in itself. Wisdom and inheritance are weighed and both are found to be good. However, wisdom is far better. Both can bring protection or shelter. But wealth does not endure; it will eventually fade away. Proverbs 23:4–5 provides good perspective: “Do not wear yourself out to get rich; do not trust your own cleverness. Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle” (NIV).

In itself, there is nothing wrong with being financially secure. Indeed, elsewhere the wisdom literature exhorts people to be wise and careful with finances (c.f., Proverbs 6:6–8). Hard times will befall almost everyone at some point in life, and all wealth can be lost. Later in Ecclesiastes 7 we are reminded: “When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider this: God has made the one as well as the other” (verse

14, NIV). While financial loss will often bring adversity, godly wisdom will endure no matter our earthly circumstances. The wise person recognizes the folly of materialism, and he or she lives according to the knowledge that only God can bring real meaning to life.

Discuss

? How can a Christian know the difference between wisely conserving money and foolishly accumulating money because he or she trusts in it for security?

? What is the proper Christian understanding of wealth?

Godly Wisdom Brings Obedience

Ecclesiastes 12:9–14

[Ecc 12:9-14 KJV] 9 And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, [and] set in order many proverbs. 10 The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and [that which was] written [was] upright, [even] words of truth. 11 The words of the wise [are] as goads, and as nails fastened [by] the masters of assemblies, [which] are given from one shepherd. 12 And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books [there is] no end; and much study [is] a weariness of the flesh. 13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this [is] the whole [duty] of man. 14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether [it be] good, or whether [it be] evil.

Say: Solomon prayed for wisdom, and God granted that request. However, we know from Solomon's life, he did not fully obey the wisdom God gave him. God has given us His Word, which is filled with wisdom for us to obey. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The Book of Ecclesiastes, written by Solomon likely toward the end of his life, offers a uniquely biblical exploration of the meaning of life. In the final chapter we find the very statement found in 1:1: "Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity" (NIV). Throughout its twelve chapters, Ecclesiastes expresses all of the ways in which Solomon sought to find pleasure and meaning in his life, and they were all in vain. Verses 9–14 form an epilogue that expresses the true meaning of life, expressed beautifully in verse 13.

Verses 9–10 highlight the wisdom of Solomon, including how he conveyed knowledge to God's people under his leadership. Much of this is available to us today in the Book of Proverbs.

Verse 11 proceeds to use an agricultural metaphor that likens words of wisdom to a goad or prod in the hand of a shepherd. This points to the guidance, direction, and instruction that comes from wisdom, and suggests that without it a person will wander from the knowledge of the Lord he or she ought to be following.

What was written by the Preacher, Solomon, is enough to reach the final conclusion to what Ecclesiastes explores. Human wisdom is not necessary for this conclusion, and our flawed understanding and conjecture can be a distraction.

The essential message as to the meaning of life is simple, “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (verse 13, KJV). God is the sole Source of wisdom, and the wise seek to know God, follow His instruction, and keep His commands.

Resource Packet Item 3: Wealth vs. Wisdom

Distribute the work sheet and divide your class into small groups. Ask each group to summarize one of the Scriptures, then have each group share their findings with the rest of the class.

Discuss

? How would you explain the meaning of life to someone who has not heard the gospel?

? From what you know of Solomon, what are some ways he sought to find pleasure and meaning in his life?

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: Much of modern wisdom is based on self-serving agendas. The wisdom that originates from God is found from the beginning of creation. Old Testament wisdom teaches us that a reverence for God is the beginning of understanding what true wisdom is all about. True, godly wisdom is timeless: If we strive to live righteously then we can expect good outcomes. Godly wisdom gives us the understanding and the ability to turn from evil behavior. Do a self-evaluation to determine if your decision-making process is based on what feels right according to cultural influences, or whether that process is grounded in your love for and willingness to listen to God.

Living It Out

Ministry in Action

- Find an unbeliever this week with whom you can share the awesomeness of God, and then spend some time sharing your faith.
- Pray for godly wisdom as you make decisions regarding your priorities.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you live in obedience to the Word.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

Moses Receives Wise Counsel.

Exodus 18:13–24

Tuesday:

Bezalel Filled With God's Wisdom.

Exodus 35:30–35

Wednesday:

Endowed with Wisdom and Understanding.

Daniel 1:17–20

Thursday:

Wise Men Seek Jesus.

Matthew 2:1–11

Friday:

Jesus Grows in Wisdom.

Luke 2:41–52

Saturday:

Walk in Wisdom.

Ephesians 5:15–21