The Call of Wisdom

Bible Background • PROVERBS 1

Printed Text • PROVERBS 1:1–4, 7-8, 10, 20-22, 32-33 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 34:11-18 **Aim for Change**

By the end of the lesson we will: RECOGNIZE the value of godly wisdom and direction, VALUE godly wisdom in our choices, and APPLY the standards of wisdom to a specific choice that needs to be made.

**In Focus**

Mae kept clicking back and forth between the websites for her top college picks. Her grandmother Daisy could see Mae was getting frustrated. “What’s the matter, sweetie?”

“I still can’t decide which college I want to go to.” Mae showed her grandmother the pictures of both colleges, with their sunny campuses, happy graduates, and winning athletes. “They’re both offering substantial financial aid. Both have active on-campus ministries. Both have the program I want. I can’t decide; they both look so good.”

Daisy never had to make this decision herself, but always wished she had gotten the opportunity. She often volunteered at a local Christian charity that offered tutoring and college admission guidance. “I’m glad to know you’ve already considered the finances, and how you’ll stay plugged in at church. What did you think of the campuses?”

Mae sighed. “I haven’t gotten to visit either of them. They’re out of state, and we could hardly afford the hotels, much less the airfare.”

“Well, you can’t trust the college’s website to show you what the school is really like. Contact a student who goes there now. Have you asked the colleges if they can help pay for you to come visit them? Some colleges do that, you know. Some charities too. I might even have some pull at a certain local charity…” Daisy said, winking at Mae.

*Why is it important to seek wise counsel before making major decisions?*

# Keep in Mind

“Fear of the LORD is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline” (Proverbs 1:7, NLT).

# Words You Should Know

1. **Proverb** (v. 1) mashal (Heb.)—A concise wise saying (or longer discourse) designed to teach one how to live
2. **Simple** (v. 4) peti (Heb.)—Naïve, untaught, inexperienced, and therefore gullible

# Say It Correctly

**Proverbial.** pro-VERB-ee-al.

**Subtilty.** SUH-till-tee.

**Naïve.** nie-EVE.

# KJV

**Proverbs 1:1** The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;

1. To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;
2. To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;
3. To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion

7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

# NLT

**Proverbs 1:1**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.

4 These proverbs will give insight to the simple, knowledge and discernment to the young.

7 Fear of the LORD is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

# The People, Places, and Times

**Wisdom Literature.** The books of the Bible that are considered wisdom literature are Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. Sometimes some of the Psalms, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations receive this label too. This is a modern way to describe a genre of literature from the ancient Near East, which was plentiful in Egypt and

Mesopotamian cultures as well. Sometimes wisdom literature directly presents adages or wise sayings (like Proverbs). Other pieces in the genre ponder a deep question over the course of many conversations and situations (like Job). These books present challenges in understanding them, as they ask questions, yet seem to contradict themselves, and voice doubts quite unlike the prophetic and narrative books. From this, however, we can learn that God is not afraid of our questions. He welcomes our honesty. Biblical wisdom literature asks questions but also assures us that God has the answers. We just need to trust Him.

# Background

The purpose of the book of Proverbs is summed up in chapter 1:2. “To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding.” In other words, the purpose of Proverbs is to teach the readers wisdom so that they will allow wisdom to govern their lives. Applying wisdom to one’s life means approaching all of life’s situations and challenges from God’s point of view, thinking and living according to His will and truth. That is why “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (v. 7). Therefore, possessing wisdom is related to one’s relationship with God. Reverence and awe toward God is the essential prelude to all wisdom and successful living. Wisdom is one of God’s divine attributes. God in His grace must reveal it if we are to truly grasp it. Wisdom takes insights gained from our knowledge of God’s truth and applies them to our daily lives.

If we have wisdom, it will lead to godly living. God wants us to be fair, just, and righteous. The foolish do not act in accordance with God’s Word and reject all instruction. They are self-reliant and prideful. Their only hope is to answer wisdom’s call to listen and obey, which will result in safety and peace. The alternative is to be destroyed by acting wayward and self-righteous (1:32–33). The results of seeking wisdom present a clear contrast with living a life of foolishness.

The Book of Proverbs, which is classified among the Wisdom Books of the Old Testament, is a collection of proverbial sayings. It is actually a collection of collections of proverbs composed by different authors over a period of time and finally collected into a single book. Solomon wrote many of the proverbs, but he also collected 3,000 proverbs (1 Kings 4:29–34). Some proverbs in this book were written by Agur and Lemuel, who are otherwise unknown. Many scholars agree that the book is an anthology comprised of seven discrete units (1—9; 10:1–22:16; 22:17—24:22; 24:23—24:34; 25—29; 30; 31). Chapters 1 through 9, from which our first unit is taken, are considered wisdom for young people. But all people can learn from the wisdom shared.

*How did Solomon use godly wisdom as king?*

**At-A-Glance**

1. Wisdom for Godly Living (Proverbs 1:1–4, 7–8, 10)
2. Wisdom Personified (vv. 20–22, 32–33)

# In Depth

## 1. Wisdom for Godly Living (Proverbs 1:1–4, 7–8, 10)

Solomon is identified as the author. The student (son) is addressed by a teacher (father) (vv. 2–3). He is being told how to get wisdom for godly living, which will lead to appropriate actions. God wants us to be righteous, just, and fair. The teacher is the one who provides the student with the guidance and good advice necessary because they may lack proper judgment (v. 4). The theme of the book of Proverbs is contained in verse 7. We are wise if we have a “fear of the LORD,” which is awe, reverence, and respect of God. True wisdom comes from God. We need to have a relationship with God and obey God’s Word. The Word gives us a revelation about who God is and His requirements for living as faithful believers.

Those who will not pursue wisdom are called “fools” who “despise wisdom and instruction” because they think they know everything and do not need God. Fools cannot distinguish between good and bad or right and wrong. People who are arrogant and self-sufficient will reject the need to depend on God or anyone else. It is very hard to convince them otherwise. They do not understand that God is the source of all wisdom and has given them the ability to attain success.

Families are the foundation where children should learn about loving and honoring God. Parents have to set an example. The instructions are a warning from the father to his son about listening to instructions given by his parents and not being enticed by sin (vv. 8–10). Sin often looks and feels good. However, it is only a temporary feeling that will leave us empty.

*How can parents instruct and demonstrate to their children a “fear of the Lord”?*

## 2. Wisdom Personified (vv. 20–22, 32–33)

Wisdom is personified and given a human voice (v. 20–33). Wisdom is shouting in the streets, on the corners, and the entrance of the cities to the “simple ones.” They are questioned about how long they will continue to act foolish (v. 22). It is in these areas that many wayward people gather and commit sinful acts. Why continue down the same path you have seen others go down and be destroyed (v. 32)? Wisdom is not hidden; God is calling for the foolish to change course and live.

If we listen to God’s wisdom, we can live in safety and peace no matter what the future holds (v. 33). We know God promised not to leave or forsake us. He will guide us as we face challenges if we ask for wisdom to make the right choices.

*What foolish acts have you witnessed others do that godly wisdom has helped you avoid?*

## Search the Scriptures

1. What is the purpose of the Proverbs (Proverbs 1:2–3)? 2. What is “the beginning of knowledge” (v. 7)?

3. How can one avoid calamity in their life and have peace (vv. 32–33)?

## Discuss the Meaning

1. Discuss the difference between knowledge and wisdom. Are both important?
2. When we have to make major decisions, it is good to seek wise counseling. Whom do you trust to give you wise counsel? How has their advice impacted your life?
3. How does one know when contemplating an important decision whether the choice is God’s will versus your flesh?

## Liberating Lesson

Life is full of choices. Every day we make choices about whether to go to work, what to do at work, what to eat, how to comb our hair, what clothes to put on, when to go to bed, and so on. Hundreds of choices are made with little thought. But life often gives us difficult decisions that need to be made.

When we witness injustices in our communities, we can either turn the other way or stop and intervene. If we intervene, there may be consequences that affect not only us but our family too. How can we use godly wisdom while trying to help others be treated fairly? It is not an easy answer. Perhaps join or organize protest groups, march, create online petitions, and learn other nonviolent techniques. We can no longer sit in the churches and ignore the social, religious, and civil injustices that are manifesting themselves in our communities. It is time to make a firm decision about how to help our neighbors no matter their race, religion, or nationality. What is God calling you to do? Seek wise counseling before acting and trust God for the outcome.

## Application for Activation

When we have to make life-altering decisions, the burden can have us feeling inadequate trying to understand what to do. We need to seek to evaluate life situations in light of God’s character and purposes and make decisions based on divine wisdom. We cannot rely on foolish people to help us. They will lead us astray, and our situation will end in calamity. Whatever choices need to be made, we can rely on God for help. We are to make a conscious effort to apply godly standards of wisdom to the choice that needs to be made. We need to read the Word, pray, talk to other Christians who have shared experiences, pray some more, and then act in accordance with what the Holy Spirit guides us to do. If we obey the Spirit, we will have the benefit of peace.

## Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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## Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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More Light on the Text

**Proverbs 1:1–4, 7–8, 10, 20–22, 32–33**

## 1 The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;

“Proverbs” is not only the title of the book, but it also designates the specific type of Wisdom Literature that comprises this book. “Proverb” in Hebrew is mashal (maw-SHAWL). Although a mashal is usually a brief,