

# Wisdom: How, When, and Why

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Wisdom is the ability to make choices that bring about the best end for everyone involved. Wisdom, we have been told, is applied knowledge. And it is. But there's more to it than that; it also involves when and how much to apply. Wisdom is perspicuity, the perception to see the end of the thing from the beginning.

Solomon explained wisdom in his Proverbs. He showed how it affects every area of life in his book of Ecclesiastes. While performing the most extensive experiment with life ever performed, he said over and over again "my wisdom remained with me." It was wisdom that forced him to the conclusion that to "fear God and keep his commandments" is "the whole duty of man" (Eccles. 12:13). I seriously doubt that a mortal man ever uttered a truth wiser than that.

Wisdom affects every area of life. It's presence—or sometimes the lack of it—is seen in every decision we make, beginning on the school yard and proceeding all the way to the cemetery. When our decisions are wise, things tend to progress nicely and without much interference. When our decisions are fraught with foolishness, there is constant trouble. Now that is not to say that wisdom never produces any difficulty, for such is not the case. Many a wise decision has brought about mounds of variance, dissonance, and hardship; but those problems are not the fault of the wise decision, but rather a failure to properly discern the wisdom involved.

Might I suggest some things where wisdom leaves its mark?

**Wisdom affects how we speak.** Few things are more beautiful than a few well-chosen words, an apt remark, or a wise response. And few choices are wiser than to know when to speak, how much to say, and when to leave off saying any more. Many a heartache could have been avoided had there been a careful consideration of what to say and how to say it, a wise tongue.

**Wisdom affects how we act.** Some noble deed performed, some wise solution suggested, some wise action taken—all these things have the imprimatur of wisdom. And how the opposite of these things impedes progress and foments trouble. Some deed left undone, some solution ignored, some wise action neglected—all these things have the imprimatur of stupidly stamped indelibly upon them.

**Wisdom affects how we decide.** In no place does wisdom shine more brightly than in well-thought-out decisions. Never is wisdom more brilliantly displayed than when it brings about a desirable end on account of a wise decision. Actually, good choices are what wisdom is all about. When it comes to how we speak, it's good choices that result. When it comes to how we act, it's making good choices that facilitate that good conduct. No matter the endeavor, good choices are necessary to make a good result.

**Wisdom is everywhere.** It's in art. Making the right color choices, choosing the right composition, selecting the light and shadows—all are about making wise decisions. In jurisprudence, it is the wise use of the law that not only determines a right course of pursuit, but brings about peace instead of chaos. The judge does just what the term suggests—he judges. In ethics and propriety, wisdom is the most necessary ingredient. Moral choices bring about happiness if they are wise; the converse, if they are unwise. Certainly wisdom figures in economics. The stock market is all about buying and selling at the right time in order to make a profit. Wise buys make money.

But most importantly, wisdom is what the gospel is all about. Wisdom is what the coming of Jesus was all about. Speaking of Him, Paul said (Col. 3:3), "...in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." How irrefutably true! He is the personification of everything wise. If we are in Christ He is made to us "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (I Cor. 1:30). In Ephesians 3:10, Paul affirms that the very existence of the church in the world attests to the wisdom of God. Hear him. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." It is foolish indeed for mankind to neglect his primary purpose in life, "to fear God and keep His commandments."

The wisest thing you can do, the wisest choice you can make is the choice to obey God