

AUGUST 16, 2020

LESSON 11

# CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD

## THE WISDOM OF GOD (COLOSSIANS 2:3)

King Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived (1 Kings 3:12; 4:29). But do you remember when Jesus said that “something greater than Solomon is here” (Matt 12:42; Luke 11:31)? He was talking about his own wisdom being greater than Solomon’s.

To take it a step further, Paul asserts that Jesus is the wisdom of God. He told the Colossian disciples that he wanted them to have a full understanding of Christ, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3). In an earlier letter, Paul had described Jesus as the embodiment of “the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:24, 30). Jesus doesn’t just have wisdom: he is wisdom!

Proverbs 8 personifies Wisdom as a capable craftswoman who was with God “before the beginning of the earth” and helped create everything (Prov 8:22-31). But this description is just as applicable to Jesus, who is also described as being the creator of the world (John 1:2-3, 10; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2; cf. Ps 33:6). Jesus, who is the Word of God (John 1:1, 14), is also the Wisdom of God who created everything and sustains it by his power.

### The Source of Wisdom

Wisdom comes from God. That’s why James tells us to pray to God for wisdom (James 1:5). Our search for wisdom begins with God.

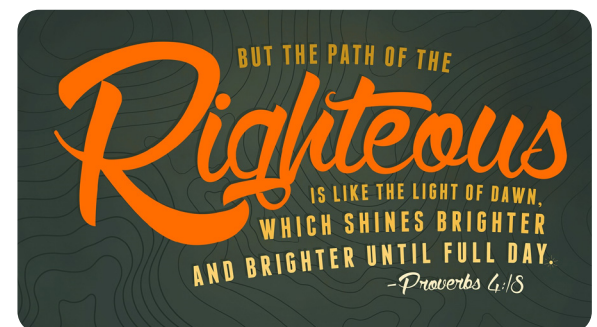
The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge;  
fools despise wisdom and instruction (Prov 1:7).

This verse serves as the main thesis of the book of Proverbs (see also Prov 9:10; 15:33; Ps 111:10). Wisdom, knowledge, and understanding (close synonyms in the book of Proverbs) will help us to live happily and godly, according to Solomon (Prov 3:5-8). We rely completely on God for everything, trusting him “with all your heart.”

The world offers wisdom, too. But it is only “wise” insofar as it mirrors the wisdom of God. Think about it: God is the one who created everything. And so, it should stand to reason that he knows best how the world works. Jesus, as the embodiment of wisdom, lived out a sinless life. He is the ultimate example of what it means to live in accordance with Proverbs.

### “Knowledge” and “Wisdom”

What is the difference between “knowledge” and “wisdom”?





## How to Use Wisdom

How are we supposed to know how to use wisdom to navigate through our daily lives? A study of the entire book of Proverbs would definitely be a step in the right direction. But consider also that the principles of righteous living found throughout the Bible will help us. Paul told the Ephesians that we should be as “children of light... try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord” (Eph 5:10). We work and play in the world. Using the principles of God’s Word to live godly will help us do what is pleasing to the Lord—and benefit us, too.

## Don’t Be Gullible

So how do we know that the voices we’re listening to are reflecting God’s wisdom? We are going to have to “test the spirits to see whether they are from God” (1 John 4:1). In today’s “woke” culture, there are many voices condemning godly behavior (such as the promotion of the nuclear family structure and its accompanying family values, which include hard work and honesty) and promoting sinful behavior and attitudes (abortion, sexual immorality, foul language, even justifying violence and rioting nowadays). While it is true that Jesus said, “Judge not” (Matt 7:1), he also said that we should “not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment” (John 7:24). This includes the teachings people promote which are contrary to the Bible.

## Let the Gospel Transform You

Paul describes the darkness of a godless society in the first chapter of Romans (Rom 1:18–32). As the practical section of his letter begins in chapter 12, he says that we should not “be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you

may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12:2). A mature Christian will let the gospel change him or her from the inside out. Otherwise the world will crush you and mold you into its image, rather than God’s.

James contrasts God’s wisdom “from above” with demonic wisdom (James 3:13–18). Wisdom from above will change our hearts and thus transform our behavior. We will act like Jesus, who epitomized the happy life. Just like Psalm 1 admonishes us, we should meditate on God’s Word and let it guide our paths (Ps 1:1–3).

## The Greatness of God’s Wisdom

Paul praised “the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God” by describing it as “unsearchable” and “inscrutable” (Rom 11:33). This comes at the end of his defense of the gospel as God’s plan of salvation (Rom 1–11). In Christ, who is the wisdom of God, we can find forgiveness of sins and our true purpose for living.

### The Words of the Wise

Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise,  
and apply your heart to my knowledge,  
for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you,  
if all of them are ready on your lips.  
That your trust may be in the LORD,  
I have made them known to you today, even to you.

—Prov 22:17–19