

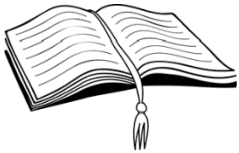
Wisdom

Do you know what wisdom is? Here’s a quick and simple definition:

Wisdom is recognizing the difference between good, helpful courses of action and bad, harmful ones; and then choosing to do the better actions rather than the worse ones.

God’s word, the Bible, has quite a lot to say about wisdom. It all boils down to this ...

Don’t be a fool -- GET WISDOM!



Let’s start with two truths from the books of Psalms and Proverbs. Both of them are repeated, for emphasis.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Psalms 111:10 and Proverbs 9:10)

The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” (Psalms 14:1 and 53:1)

The Bible teaches that God really does exist, and anyone who thinks He doesn’t is a fool. And those who think they can oppose Him or do without Him should wise up, because having God for an enemy is really scary! If you try to oppose Him and are not afraid, then you have not even begun to be wise.

Before we discuss how to get wisdom, we need to cover a few things about right and wrong.

Do you know right from wrong? Most of us do, most of the time. Sometimes we don’t know because we’re ignorant -- we were never taught or just didn’t learn that a particular action is wrong. And sometimes we can get confused or misled into thinking that a wrong thing is actually the right thing to do. When we do know right from wrong, wisdom is what helps us to make good choices rather than bad ones.

How do we know the difference between right and wrong? A little of it we know instinctively.

Some of it, we hope, is taught to us by loving parents and other mentors. Much of it we have to learn by making mistakes and getting corrected, or by suffering the painful consequences of our wrong choices.

Because of the sin nature that we inherited from Adam and Eve, we are born selfish. We naturally think stealing, for instance, is okay if we can get away with it. Likewise lying to stay out of trouble seems like the best way to go. We need to learn that such actions are wrong.

About these and many other things, this Bible verse applies: *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.* (Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25)

Sometimes children do not get the teaching they need about right and wrong. Too often they grow up with too little guidance and too many bad examples of adult behavior.

Getting addicted to drugs or alcohol is stupid. Selling drugs is wrong. You know that. But the local kid who’s a pusher has money and seems happy. Why not be like him?

Having sex outside of marriage, just because it feels good, is wrong. You may or may not know that -- in our messed up society, many people say it’s not wrong at all.

Here’s the bottom line: if you want to be wise, then learn the difference between right and wrong. If you want to learn it, don’t trust your instincts, don’t trust your peers, for sure don’t trust our society’s popular opinion, and don’t even trust loving adults unless their ideas are based on God’s truth.

What is God’s truth about right and wrong? It starts with the Ten Commandments, which cover how we should relate to God and to each other. You should already know what they are: *Worship only God;*



respect His name and His day of rest; honor your parents; don't murder, steal, lie, commit adultery, or covet other people's stuff. All that is pretty clear.

Jesus netted all of that down to: *Love God wholeheartedly, and love your neighbor as you love yourself.* He also said *You must forgive others if you want God to forgive your sins; and Treat other people the way you would want others to treat you.*

The Apostle Paul had this to say: *Be filled with the Holy Spirit -- those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God; and Let the Holy Spirit of God produce in you the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*

There's quite a lot in the Bible about right and wrong behavior. We should study that and pay attention to it. But it also helps to have a good example to follow. One that comes to my mind immediately is Walter Payton. He played pro football, a violent game, but he was a gentle person. He was a star, but he didn't brag or show off or taunt his opponents.

Perhaps wisdom's most important job is to govern our tendency toward wrong behavior. When we win at something, we want to strut. When we're threatened, we get fearful. When we're frustrated, we get angry. All of those can lead to wrong, even stupid, actions, including violence, if we don't have wisdom. (Or even if we have wisdom, but don't use it.)

Okay. So how do we get wisdom?

1. First of all, ask God for it. *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. (James 1:5)* Don't hesitate to admit before God, "I need wisdom!"

2. Read the four gospels and pay attention to the teaching of Jesus. He has a lot to say about things we should do and things we shouldn't do.

3. Ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told His followers He would *send them the Spirit of truth, who would guide them into all the truth.* (John 15:26 and 16:13) And Paul

informed us that *Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. (Romans 8:14)*

4. Learn from mistakes you or others have made.. If you have made choices that you now realize were wrong, confess them to yourself and remember them. Maybe even write them down on a notebook page headed, "Things I'm never going to do again."

5. (But this is really #1) Work on your relationship with God. Spend time with God in prayer (remember **Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication** from last month's "Good News Guide"). Ask the Holy Spirit to help you pray. (See Romans 8:26)

6. Also listen to godly friends and counselors, but be careful to test what they say to make sure it lines up with the Bible's teaching. Unfortunately, some Christians (even some pastors and teachers) think they understand matters better than the writers of the Bible books did. And that, of course, is foolishness. They are preferring their own opinions to the Holy Spirit-inspired Word of God. Never listen to people who "know better" than the Bible.

7. Finally, there's this admonition: *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 direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)* Trust God, keep Him Lord of your life, and His Holy Spirit will guide your steps and make you wise.

One more thing. Some people think the Bible is just a book of rules, of DO's and DON'T's. That's not what it is. The Bible is actually a love letter from God to you and me. He wants us all to know how much He loves us. And He gives us rules for right and wrong behavior, with both good and bad examples, in order to help us walk in His ways of Blessing toward our heavenly Home with Him.

Be wise enough to ask God for wisdom.

Blessings and Peace,

Brother Roland

[Wisdom is about making good choices. This piece by Max Lucado is a favorite of mine.]

I Choose Love

It's quiet. It's early. My coffee is hot. The sky is still black. The world is still asleep. The day is coming.

In a few moments the day will arrive. It will roar down the track with the rising of the sun. The stillness of the dawn will be exchanged for the noise of the day. The calm of solitude will be replaced by the pounding pace of the human race. The refuge of the early morning will be invaded by decisions to be made and deadlines to be met.

For the next twelve hours I will be exposed to the day's demands. It is now that I must make a choice. Because of Calvary, I'm free to choose. And so I choose.

I choose love ...

No occasion justifies hatred; no injustice warrants bitterness. Today I will love God and love what God loves.

I choose joy ...

I will invite my God to be the God of circumstance. I will refuse the temptation to be cynical ... the tool of the lazy thinker. I will refuse to see people as anything less than human beings, created by God. I will refuse to see any problem as anything less than an opportunity to see God.

I choose peace ...

I will live forgiven. I will forgive so that I may live.

I choose patience...

I will overlook the inconveniences of the world. Instead of cursing the one who takes my place, I'll invite him to do so. Rather than complain that the wait is too long, I will thank God for a moment to pray. Instead of clenching my fist at new assignments, I will face them with joy and courage.

I choose kindness...

I will be kind to the poor, for they are alone. Kind to the rich, for they are afraid. And kind to the unkind, for such is how God has treated me.

I choose goodness...

I will go without a dollar before I will take a dishonest one. I will be overlooked before I will boast. I will confess before I will accuse. I choose goodness.

I choose faithfulness ...

Today I will keep my promises. My debtors will not regret their trust. My associates will not question my word. My spouse will not question my love. And my children will never fear that their father will not come home.

I choose gentleness ...

Nothing is won by force. I choose to be gentle. If I raise my voice may it be only in praise. If I clench my fist, may it be only in prayer. If I make a demand, may it be only of myself

I choose self-control ...

I am a spiritual being. After this body is dead, my spirit will soar. I refuse to let what will rot, rule the eternal. I choose self-control. I will be drunk only by joy. I will be impassioned only by my faith. I will be influenced only by God. I will be taught only by Christ. I choose self-control.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. To these I commit my day. If I succeed, I will give thanks. If I fail, I will seek his grace. And then, when this day is done, I will place my head on my pillow and rest.

— Max Lucado

Moving? If your address is changing, please send me your new address. Maryland inmates, don't forget to include your SID number. I would like to keep sending you the "Good News Guide" for as long as you'd like to receive it. As always, if you want to send me a question or a comment, send them to me at this address:

Brother Roland, P.O. Box 14, Fayetteville PA 17222

The Wisdom of Proverbs

A number of contrasting images from the book of Proverbs ...

Puzzle:

R F I V N Q I Z G V I V N K S A V O I D M I S T A K E S Q R L T
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V A J D J S L S W D B B L S H R N G J E W G G Q U X R O L N I R
S I N V I T E D I S A S T E R W B X P I I H Q G C D Q I A D K Z

Words:

** Wise people:

FEAR THE LORD
SAY NO TO TEMPTERS
WANT TO LEARN
PAY ATTENTION
ACCEPT CORRECTION
ASK FOR WISDOM
SEEK UNDERSTANDING
ARE EAGER TO LEARN
AVOID MISTAKES
ARE GLAD TO DO GOOD
TRUST IN THE LORD
ARE KIND TO OTHERS
DEAL HONESTLY
ENJOY GOD'S FAVOR
REMEMBER INSTRUCTION
WALK IN THE LIGHT

** Foolish people

SAY THERE IS NO GOD
SAY YES TO TEMPTATION
PREFER IGNORANCE
REFUSE TO LISTEN
DESPISE REPROOF
LIKE BEING FOOLISH
REFUSE TO BE TAUGHT
ALREADY KNOW IT ALL
INVITE DISASTER
REJOICE IN DOING EVIL
TRUST THEIR OWN IDEAS
ARE SELFISH
DEAL DECEITFULLY
EARN GOD'S SCORN
FORGET LESSONS
STUMBLE IN DARKNESS