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Wisdom from God

Key Theme

- God wants us to study His Word.

Key Passages

- Proverbs 1:1–7, 2:1–6, 19:1–29; Colossians 2:2–3

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe the source of all wisdom.
- Identify different areas of wisdom from the book of Proverbs.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

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Write on the board, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.—Proverbs 32:7”
Students will place paper strips at Proverbs 1, 2, and 19, and Colossians 1.
Students will practice the memory verse.



Activity 1: Pop Quiz

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The students will decide if certain proverbs are from the Bible or from the culture.

- Print one Pop Quiz from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student
- Pencils



Studying God's Word

page 5

The wisdom we need to seek—the only wisdom worth having—is wisdom we can receive from God through His Word. The Bible is a treasure God wants us to mine. The book of Proverbs, written by the wisest man that ever lived, is full of answers to everyday problems we all face. If we study and apply the wisdom in this book, we will see our lives change to be godlier and far less worldly.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Read through Proverbs 1, 2, and 19.
- Go Before the Throne.



Activity 2: Mining for Truth

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The students will examine Proverbs 19 and assemble a list of topics addressed by God's wisdom.

- Student Guides
- Pencils



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the lesson key passages along with this background.

God blessed Solomon with wisdom. In fact, God gave Solomon a wise and understanding heart such that he was the wisest man who ever lived (1 Kings 3:12). This wisdom came in response to Solomon's request as a young king for wisdom from God to judge the people properly and according to God's will. As a young king, he demonstrated his humble dependence on God. He knew that in order to properly discern between good and evil he would need godly wisdom (1 Kings 3:6–9).

Using the wisdom He gave to Solomon, God inspired the writing of the book of Proverbs, most of which was written by Solomon. The proverbs give us basic godly principles for life in simple, straightforward language. They deal with all aspects of life: money, time, friendships, lust, murder, laziness, theft, personal habits, faith, trusting God, etc. These statements are often not meant as absolutes, but general principles and instructions from God.

Care should be taken while studying the proverbs to compare Scripture with Scripture before conclusions are drawn. For example, Proverbs 22:4 says, "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life." Is every humble Christian rich? Unfortunately, many teachers take passages like this and teach them as absolute promises of material wealth. We must be careful that our understanding of each of these nuggets of wisdom is applied alongside the whole counsel of God.

The opening lines from Solomon make it clear that it is the fear of the Lord that brings knowledge and understanding, which we need to interpret Scripture (Proverbs 1:7). Solomon repeatedly instructs his sons, the immediate audience of much of the book of Proverbs, to seek wisdom and understanding from God—the source of all wisdom. He tells them to "cry out," to

"lift up your voice," to "search," and to "treasure" the words of wisdom. The truths contained in God's Word are there, but we must be diligent to search them out, to understand them, to meditate on them, and to apply them to our lives. None of this can happen apart from God's grace in our lives, which gives us the desire and ability to understand His truths.

As stated above, Proverbs teaches repeatedly that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. That same fear of the Lord—reverence for who God is and fear of His wrath and judgment—will lead us to Christ in whom we find all the treasures and fullness of understanding and wisdom (Colossians 2:2–3). As we set our minds on Christ and meditate on how He was the perfect example of wisdom, we begin to understand better how to behave in a way that will honor God. Ultimately, true godly wisdom will come in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And this will happen only through searching the Scriptures in a way that will show ourselves approved to God (2 Timothy 2:15).

Apart from faith, nothing that we do pleases God (Hebrews 11:6). The proverbs offer wise and universal principles for living that people can put into practice, regardless of whether they have submitted their lives to Christ or not. And in many cases, according to God's goodness, living by these principles will provide benefits to Christians and non-Christians. However, these blessings rendered to non-Christians are temporary.

The proverbs instruct on moral and right behavior. We must be aware that our behavior is not what brings us favor in the eyes of God. Nothing we do can commend us to God. It is only through the perfect obedience of Christ on our behalf that we are considered righteous in His eyes.

As you teach this lesson, be careful not to promote a gospel of works. Obedience to God through works is pleasing to Him, but our salvation is founded solely on the grace of God through the gift of faith—not by works (Ephesians 2:8–10). Gratitude for our salvation based on

what Christ has done, and the fact that we are new creatures in Christ with new desires that want to honor and please Him, will encourage (and enable) right behavior lived out according to the wisdom of Proverbs.

Much of the book of Proverbs was likely written early in Solomon's reign. Scripture tells us that Solomon often failed to heed his own advice, and later in life, his heart was disloyal to the Lord (1 Kings 11:4). You might think that, being the wisest man on the planet, he would never make a mistake. Well, that just wasn't the case. Have you ever done something that you knew wasn't what God intended for you? Did you ever offer someone advice and then did the opposite yourself? This seems to be the case with Solomon. He knew it was wrong to offer sacrifices to other gods, but he did it (1 Kings 3:3). He knew God forbade the king to have multiple wives, but he married many (1 Kings 11:1–13). He knew that God was the only true source of fulfillment, yet he sought it in God's creation (Ecclesiastes 2). We see in his later writing, the book of Ecclesiastes, that Solomon lamented the time and energy he squandered pursuing the things of the world—and neglecting the things of God. In fact, Solomon strongly warned the generations to follow to avoid the sinful mistakes he had made.

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

As you examine cultures around the world, you will find the wisdom of the ages preserved in various forms. Proverbs from around the world have been passed down through the generations in verbal and written form. You can find an example by visiting your local Chinese restaurant! While there may be some truth to many of these proverbs, they are born out of experience rather than wisdom from God. Because they are not grounded in a fear of the Lord (Proverbs

1:7, 2:5–6), those proverbs are worldly wisdom, not godly wisdom.

Another problem with many cultural proverbs is that they get equated with biblical proverbs. If you took a survey, many people would not be able to tell the difference. For example, the phrase “God helps those who help themselves,” is thought by many to be from the Bible when, in fact, it is the worldly wisdom found in Poor Richard's Almanac. This is why we must constantly check everything that we hear against Scripture and help to equip our students to do the same. Only as we look to Christ and the truths found in the Word of God can we truly exercise wisdom.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Lord, you alone offer wisdom that is more valuable than pure gold. Forgive me for the times I have sought after the wisdom of man. It is too easy to run to the computer or pick up the phone when I need advice. Instead, I should seek you and your Word when I need wisdom and counsel. Give me courage, Lord, to turn others to your Word when they come to me for answers. My students need this life-transforming truth! Grant them the ability to recognize the difference between perfect truth and wisdom that only comes from God and counterfeit wisdom that man offers. Holy Spirit, move through the words and the activities in this lesson. May they inspire us to begin a new habit of going to the Word for answers and trusting the Lord alone for true wisdom.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will mark their Bibles at Proverbs 1, 2, and 19, and Colossians 1 with strips of paper.
- They will recite the memory verse after they unscramble the words on the Memory Verse Review Sheet.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. Students should unscramble the letters of the missing words and then recite the verse to you or another student. Each week the verse will get harder to unscramble. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



Review

A few weeks ago, we talked about Solomon and how he received supernatural wisdom as a gift from God. Today's lesson is going to allow us to examine some of the wisdom that he and others recorded by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

When we came up with a definition for wisdom based on several passages of

Scripture, we found that wisdom is applying knowledge given by God to live a life that reflects the character of God. Wisdom is putting the truths of God into practice in our lives. Today, we are going to expand on the topic of wisdom.





Pop Quiz

MATERIALS

- Pop Quiz for each student
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

If time is short, you can move through this activity quickly.

POP QUIZ! There are many proverbs floating around in our culture today. I want to give you a little quiz, so get out a pencil and answer the questions on this pop quiz.

Hand out the pop quizzes. Write a B next to those that come right out of the Bible and a C next to those that are just common wisdom or ideas not found in Scripture. Keep your answers to yourself for a minute.

Read each of the proverbs, pausing for a moment for the students to record their answers, and then quickly review the answers.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

- ? A penny saved is a penny earned. *C—Actually a misquotation of Benjamin Franklin.*

- ? Spare the rod, spoil the child. *C—Loosely based on Proverbs 22:15, 23:13, 29:15.*
- ? A merry heart does good, like medicine. *B—Proverbs 17:22a.*
- ? God helps those who help themselves. *C—Popularized by Benjamin Franklin and contrary to Scripture.*
- ? The early bird gets the worm. *C—A popular proverb of unknown origin, but obvious meaning.*
- ? Cleanliness is next to godliness. *C—Not found in Scripture.*
- ? Follow your heart and it will never lead you astray. *C—The opposite of what Scripture teaches.*
- ? Wealth makes many friends. *B—Proverbs 19:4a.*
- ? Patience is a virtue. *C—Attributed to Aristotle, but patience is a fruit of the Spirit.*

While there is practical help in many of those common proverbs, many are set forward as true wisdom. Are they really wise sayings?



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Well, today we will look at the book of Proverbs to help us better understand God's view of wisdom. There is no Proverbs 32 (*referring to the quote on the board*). We need to be careful not to confuse the wisdom of the world (or Confucius in this case) with the wisdom of God.

Let's read Proverbs 1:1–7 together. This section is a sort of prologue to the entire book and gives the purpose of the book. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

- Write on the board, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.—Proverbs 32:7"

Proverbs 1:1–7

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? Who is the author of this passage? *Solomon.*
- ? Did Solomon write all of Proverbs? *No, looking at chapters 30 and 31, other authors are identified. Also, Solomon may have been recording the words of others, but still under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.*
- ? What is the purpose of the book, according to this passage? *So that people may know wisdom, that the simple may become prudent, that the young can gain knowledge and discretion, and that the wise can increase in learning.*
- ? We talked about poetic form a few weeks ago. Do you notice poetic form in this passage? *There are several couplets. Verses 5 and 6 are both couplets that repeat the idea in two similar ways. Verse 7 is a couplet that contrasts the wise and the foolish.*
- ? What two types of people are contrasted in verse 7? *Those who fear the Lord are contrasted with fools.*
- ? What is important about the fear of the Lord? *It is the beginning of knowledge. In Proverbs 9:10, it is the beginning of wisdom.*
- ? What does it mean to “fear the Lord”? *This is not referring to being afraid of God like we are afraid of spiders or an angry person about to harm us, but a reverential awe and respect for God as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe.*

Proverbs 9:10

wise

Discover the Truth

Though Solomon is clearly the author of this section of Proverbs, later sections also point to other authors. Ultimately, however, these things were recorded under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Wisdom comes from God. That should make sense because one of God’s attributes is wisdom. God alone is perfectly wise. When we seek wisdom, we seek to be like God.

What other attributes of God help us to understand His wisdom? *He is omniscient, eternal, just, and immutable. All of those attributes should assure us of God’s wisdom in every circumstance.*



READ THE WORD

Proverbs 2:1–9

Let’s look at Proverbs 2:1–9 and find out how to get wisdom. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? What is the general attitude of the wise person presented in this passage? *The tone of the passage is one of seeking, listening, and treasuring the teaching that leads to wisdom; receive, treasure, incline your ear, apply your heart, seek, search.*

- ? What term do you see in this passage that we also saw in Proverbs 1? *“The fear of the Lord” is used again.*
- ? In verse 5, what is equated with the fear of the Lord? *It is set in a comparative couplet with the “knowledge of God.” As we mentioned before, knowing who God is should lead us to fear Him—in a reverential way.*
- ? Where does wisdom come from based on this passage? *The Lord gives wisdom, and it comes from His mouth.*
- ? If we want to find wisdom, where should we be looking for it? *If wisdom comes from the mouth of the Lord, then we should be looking to Scripture to find wisdom. The Scriptures are breathed out by God (2 Timothy 3:16), and the ideas of doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness are found here in the chapters of Proverbs, as well.*

2 Timothy 3:16

As we think about fearing God, our thoughts surely go to the fear of God for His just judgment against sinful people. But all of those who are in Christ have no reason to fear God’s wrath because it has been taken by Jesus on the Cross. That should lead us to reverent fear before a holy and awesome God who has saved us in spite of our rebellion against Him.

Colossians 2:1–3

Turn to Colossians 2 and listen as I read verses 1–3. *Read the verses aloud.*

- ? What do we find in Christ? *All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ.*
- ? Why does understanding who Christ is more fully help us to grow in wisdom? *Knowing that He lived a perfect life of obedience to the Father, we have an example of wise living. Further, understanding who Jesus is and what He has done for us should lead us to desire to know more of Him and His righteousness and to obey His commands. In understanding Christ more fully, we gain wisdom.*

1 Corinthians 2:10–15

If wisdom comes from God the Father and from God the Son, can it also come from God the Spirit? Let’s look at 1 Corinthians 2:10–15. *Have someone read the passage aloud. The Holy Spirit allows us to truly understand what God has revealed to us in His Word and in the person of Jesus Christ.*

Discover the Truth

Without wisdom from God, we cannot understand righteousness and justice. We cannot understand how to live a life that is pleasing to God, let alone the mysteries of God as He has revealed them to us in the Bible. And the only place to seek that wisdom is in the Scriptures that tell us of those mysteries. As we seek for wisdom as a precious treasure, we can look to Christ’s perfect character and rely on the Holy Spirit to give us that wisdom. As we prayerfully study God’s Word, we can confidently ask the Holy Spirit to teach us the truths it contains and to guide us in applying it to our lives. By doing so, we can truly be seeking to imitate Jesus and to be conformed into His image more and more every day.





Mining for Truth

MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Students will examine Proverbs 19 and come up with a list of topics addressed by this section of God's Word.

There are other places in Scripture where you can find proverbs, but we find a concentration of them in the 31 chapters of the book of Proverbs. The first nine chapters are mostly teaching about wisdom and how to apply wisdom to some specific topics. From chapter 10, the rest of the book is basically packed with little nuggets of truth covering lots of topics. Some of these are simple statements of truth while others offer conditional truths based on obedience or various activities.

In your Student Guides is an activity called Mining for Truth. Your job is to open to chapter 19 and identify the basic topics or

areas of wisdom addressed in this chapter. For example, look at 19:1. *Read the verse aloud.* This proverb is about integrity or character. Go through the rest of these passages and identify the topics covered by each verse. *If time is short, have half of the class work on verses 1–14 and the other on 15–29.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Let's share some of the topics you have identified. *Have various people share the topics: character, knowledge, lying, bribery, anger, obedience to God, helping the poor, money, parenting, etc.*

We have only examined a small set of the entire book, but I trust you can see the breadth of the wisdom here. This should remind us of the sufficiency of Scripture and assure us that we can always look to God's Word to guide us in truth. God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness through His Word and His Spirit (2 Peter 1:3), and we need to be seeking those truths as if we were seeking after

precious treasure—this wisdom is more valuable than any physical treasure we could seek.

- ? Are the proverbs intended to be used as formulas for getting what we want out of life? *No. We are to apply them to please and honor God with our lives, not to apply a simple formula to find success or to get what we want.*

Many people misunderstand the conditional proverbs to be absolute statements: If you do x, you will get y. But that is not the intent of the proverbs. They are not magical incantations, but rather general principles that follow from living in a God-honoring way. There are many proverbs that are simple statements of truths, but others must be understood in light of the whole counsel of God.

- ? Look at 19:5. Does this mean that everyone who bears false witness will be punished? *Human justice is never perfect, so we know that some people who lie against others are never punished. When people are caught bearing false witness against others*

(slander or perjury), there is usually a penalty for that. However, all liars will receive justice from God, and this passage is true in an ultimate, eternal sense.

- ? Many times, people will twist a proverb to provide a promise of material blessings for obedience. Look at 22:4. Is everyone who is humble and fears God rich? *No. This is not a guarantee of material riches.*

Now, please don't misunderstand. The wisdom that is found in these passages is wisdom from God. So if we live according to these principles, we will please God. When we live a life that is pleasing to God, we will be blessed, but that doesn't mean that everything in our lives will be perfect. We should be seeking to serve God and be like Jesus whether our lives are easy and smooth or not. If we get mad at God because a proverb didn't play out in our lives, we had the wrong motive for obeying God in the first place. We must trust and obey God in spite of the circumstances.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

God's Word is filled with wisdom. But more than that, He will give us wisdom as we diligently seek to understand the truth found in His Word, seeking to become more like Jesus and relying on the Holy Spirit to guide us in that truth. We cannot forget that the Bible is the absolute authority on every issue of life. We see that in the proverbs recorded throughout Scripture. All of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ, and we must not look to the world for wisdom, but to Christ.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? What has changed in your understanding of the proverbs as a result of this lesson? *Discuss various answers.*
- ? Someone tells you, "Proverbs 22:6 says to train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. Yet some children raised in Christian homes grow up to be atheists. This proves that the Bible is wrong." How would you respond? *Point out that a proverb is a general principle, not an absolute statement. Generally speaking, those who are raised on godly principles are more likely to become godly adults, so this proverb does indeed hold true. It is important to understand the literary type of a passage of Scripture in order to properly understand its meaning.*
- ? How could memorizing a proverb about a specific sin you are struggling with help you to overcome that sinful pattern? *If you are having trouble sinning against others with your tongue, memorizing Proverbs 12:19 ("The truthful lip shall be established forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment") can inform your heart about God's view of lying. Memorizing Scripture is a wonderful deterrent to sin.*
- ? Since the book of Proverbs is not arranged topically, how would you go about finding proverbs that deal with various ideas? *Using the concordance or topical index in the back of most Bibles would be a good start. There are resources that have topical arrangements of Proverbs online or in print. Using an electronic Bible or web-based resources like BibleGateway.com or BlueLetterBible.com will allow you to search key words to identify topics.*
- ? What sources of counterfeit wisdom—the wisdom that comes from the world, not Christ—have you been attracted to in the past (or present)? How can you distinguish between godly wisdom and worldly wisdom? *There are a multitude of outlets for worldly wisdom. Anything that promises a "key" or a "secret" to fixing a problem or that promotes self-help is of the world and not of Christ. Whether it comes from the TV screen or a book, anything that elevates the ability of a person to overcome trials or accomplish goals is of the world. Popular psychology and self-help ideas are focused on exalting self rather than exalting Christ and serving others. If what you hear is not firmly grounded in Scripture, it is not true wisdom. We must compare everything to the true wisdom found in Scripture as we trust in the Holy Spirit to guide us in wisdom.*



MEMORY VERSE

1 Chronicles 29:10–11 Therefore David blessed the Lord before all the assembly; and David said: "Blessed are You, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all."



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for giving us the wisdom in His Word and in His Son.
- Praise God for being the source of all wisdom.
- Ask God to teach each person truth from His Word by His Spirit.