

# The Pathway to Eternal Wisdom

## [Part 1]

**James 3:13-18** [NIV] *“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. **But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.**”*

The end product of the wisdom that “comes from Heaven” is what every human being desires, peace and righteousness.

The very contrast to the society in which we all live today. A society full of violence and injustice.

The only place we can find this wisdom that leads to peace and righteousness is the Christian Bible.

### What should be our approach to seeking wisdom?

**1 Kings 3:5-9** [NIV] *“At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.” Solomon answered, “You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day. “Now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. **But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?**”*

What prompted Solomon who had just been made king to ask for “a discerning heart” ?

I believe this was prompted by his father King David.

**Proverbs 4:3-5** [NIV] *“When I was a boy in my father’s house, still tender, and an only child of my mother, he taught me and said, “Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live. **Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them.**”*

Solomon then continues this style throughout this book, a father passing on wisdom to his son.

What was God’s response to Solomon’s request?

**1 Kings 3:10-14** [NIV] *“The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, “Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. **Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for, both riches and honour, so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.**”*

God kept this promise and made Solomon the wisest man who has ever lived and also the richest.

The problem was that Solomon did **not** act fully on this wisdom he received.

Solomon started out well in the beginning of his reign but allowed the riches and honour to pervert his lifestyle.

In spite of this turning his back on God's way of life, Solomon still retained his wisdom to the end of his life.

**Ecclesiastes 12:8-14** [NIV] *“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Everything is meaningless!” Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true. **The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails, given by one Shepherd. Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them.** Of making many books there is no end, and much study wears the body. Now all has been heard; **here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.**”*

This is why much of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes tends to be a bit morbid in outlook.

To avoid such an end as that of Solomon we have to read Proverbs, but far more important, act on them!

**Knowledge is good, but there is a vast difference between knowledge** [having the facts] **and wisdom** [applying the facts to life].

We may amass knowledge, but without wisdom, all our knowledge is useless.

We must learn to “live out” what we know.

What will ensure that we do “live out” what we are about to learn?

**Proverbs 1:7** [NIV] *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.”*

The fear, great respect towards our Creator God will prompt us to discipline our lives into “acting out” what we learn, so we do **not** end up a knowledgeable fool.

Throughout Proverbs Solomon uses a certain style of presentation for a very specific reason.

Proverbs are **not** intended to be “spoon-fed knowledge” but seeks to force the reader to meditate on what has been written.

Proverbs are presented either in vivid pictures, analogies that are sharp in their brevity and a refusal to explain themselves, teasing us into thought.

**Proverbs encourage us into clear thinking, but the wisdom it speaks of must engage the whole human being, body, mind and human spirit [Job 32:8].**

Proverbs seek to engage **all** our affairs in life. Our sensitivity to other people, our character, our morality, and above all our relationship with our Creator God.

**Proverbs help us in our relationship with other people by prompting us to ask certain things of others.**

- a) What are they like to live with?
- b) What would they be like to employ?
- c) How do they manage their personal affairs, time and themselves?
- d) Do they talk too much?

- e) Do they have a cheerful disposition, that is bearable in the early morning?
- f) Are they a “*friend*” who is constantly in our house?
- g) Is their life rather aimless?

**All aspects of living are assessed by one criteria, are they wisdom or folly?**

Every encouragement is given for us to “*count the cost of our actions.*”

Before we start to study Proverbs verse by verse I suggest that you read through the introduction again, and make key notes that will be in the front of our mind as we study the book.

**What is a proverb?**

A proverb is a short, easy-to-learn saying that calls a person to action.

The book of Proverbs focuses on the Creator God, His character, works and blessings, telling us how we can live in close relationship with Him.

Certain Hebrew words are used in reference to wisdom understanding, instruction and foolishness, which differ in meaning, see separate article for usage.

I will list these giving each one the Strong’s Reference Number and refer to this number when the specific word is used in the text.

**Proverbs 1:1** [NIV] “*The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:*”

Solomon is passing on to us the wisdom he received from his father, King David, but also directly from our Heavenly Father, God, as promised because of his humble, dependent attitude towards God.

**Proverbs 1:2** [NIV] “*For attaining wisdom [2451] and discipline; for understanding [998] words of insight.*”

We must always have in the forefront of our mind that Jesus Christ is the “*Word*” of God, and that wisdom is His revealing the mind and character of God.

Jesus is the wisdom of God personified.

God our Heavenly Father desires to pass on to His potential children His wisdom, His character.

**Proverbs 1:3** [King James] “*To receive the instruction of wisdom [7918], justice, and judgement and equity.*”

“*Equity*” is also translated as “*integrity*”.

Notice that the translators interchange the same Hebrew word “*mûw câr*”, “*instruction*” and “*discipline*”.

As we will see Proverbs are **not** for the lazy, we are to discipline our lives, that is become a disciple of wisdom, a disciple of Jesus Christ, who is wisdom personified.

Like a student we sit at the feet of the One whom we are seeking to receive life-giving instruction.

**Proverbs 1:4** [Living Bible] “*I want to make the simple wise [6195], I want to warn young men about the problems they will face.*”

The word translated “*simple*” – Hebrew “*pethâîy*” comes from a root word meaning “*open*” therefore seducible.

This is **not** referring to the mental capacity of the person involved, it means that they are lacking in personal experience, therefore circumstances hit them unsuspectingly.

**Proverbs is designed for young people, teenagers who need to aim their lives in the right direction before they find themselves in avoidable trouble.**

**Proverbs 1:5** [NIV] “*Let the wise [2451] listen and add to their learning and let the discerning [995] get guidance.*”

**When we are young and inexperienced we all too often rush into situations without standing aside to ponder where our actions will end up.**

Proverbs have been given to us by our Heavenly Father to avoid decisions that end up in a painful and unwanted situation.

If our life starts out in the wrong direction, the course corrections we seek to make will be difficult and maybe very painful, physically and mentally.

**Proverbs 1:6** [NIV] “*for understanding [995] proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise [2451].*”

There is **no** break between these two verses.

We are being told that to understand these wise sayings we need guidance.

This is the very aim of this series of articles, we are **not** going to skim over the surface of these Proverbs but meditate on what they are seeking to show us.

Progress will be slow but the end product will be priceless.

**Proverbs 16:16** [NIV] “*How much better to get wisdom [2451] than gold, to choose understanding rather than silver!*”

**Proverbs 10:10-11** [NIV] “*He who winks maliciously causes grief, and a chattering fool [3684] comes to ruin. The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked.*”

**Matthew 13:44** [NIV] “*The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.*”

There is a parallel between seeking to be in the Kingdom [created family] of God and the seeking of wisdom, both involve digging and a total commitment.

We have to ask ourselves are we willing to make such a commitment?

**Proverbs 1:7** [NIV] “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge [1847] but fools [191] despise wisdom [2451] and discipline [4148].*”

The Hebrew word translated “*fear*” is “*yirah*” and is referring to reverence rather than terror. This is a humble acceptance that God is God, our Creator, our Sustainer and the only One who can offer us a future life.

The Hebrew word translated “*lord*” is “*yehôvîh*” meaning the self existent or eternal, without beginning or an end.

The Hebrew word translated “beginning” is “*rêshîyth*” and a better translation is, “*the principle thing.*”

It is **not** referring to something we do at the beginning of our search for wisdom, then leave it behind, but a continual attitude of mind.

We will only continue to receive wisdom from God if we have this humble, dependent attitude.

**Mark 10:15** [NIV] “*I tell you the truth, anyone who will **not** receive the kingdom of God like a little child will **never** enter it.*”

We have to constantly have a childlike attitude of dependence, trust and awe if we are to receive wisdom or the Kingdom of God, be a child of God.

This is the main reason that God introduces Himself to all humanity as a Father, a loving Father.

Faith in God should be the controlling principle for our understanding of the world, our attitudes, and our actions. If we trust in God He will make us truly wise.

Fools seal their own fate by their own behaviour by being incorrigible and refusing to listen to sound advice.