

Walking In Wisdom Series: 2

Wisdom Is the Principal Thing

Proverbs 4.7

“Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *Therefore* get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding”

This verse tells us that the principal thing is wisdom and that we should have it and not just have it but that we should go all out to get it. Wisdom is not something that is elusive or hard to obtain. James tells us that if we lack wisdom we should ask for it from God and it will be given to us- “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given him” James 1.5

It will be given to us – that is a direct promise from God. The only conditions to our receiving wisdom are these:

- ask – we have to ask for it
- ask in faith – we need to ask God in faith, believing that we will receive it
- without doubting – without doubt, hesitation or wavering

Walking in wisdom requires more diligence because it is progressive. We do not receive all wisdom that there is when we ask Him but that which is needed and necessary for the moment. Again walking in wisdom requires faith on our part, step by step trusting God as He imparts wisdom to us.

We read in Proverbs “wisdom is the principal thing”. What does this mean?

The principal is the first, in place, time, order or rank. The principal is the chief, the captain, the head. It is the beginning and best, the choicest part.

Listen to the first phrase of this verse in some other translations:

International Standard Version - “Wisdom is of utmost importance...”

Today's English Version and *New Living Translation* - “Getting wisdom is the most important thing you can do...”

New Century Version - “Wisdom is the most important thing..”

Young's Literal Translation (1898) - “The first thing *is* wisdom...”

Bible In Basic English - “the first sign of wisdom is to get wisdom”

World English Bible and *New International Version* - “Wisdom is supreme...”

New English Bible - “The first thing is to acquire wisdom...”

New International Reader's Version - “Wisdom is best, so get wisdom..”

The Amplified Translation - “The beginning of Wisdom is: get Wisdom..”

The Message - “Above all and before all, do this: Get Wisdom!”

How can we define wisdom?

My definition is this:

“the ability to judge and act on God's principles for righteous living”

The Amplified Bible gives us a definition of wisdom in Proverbs 4.11: “I have taught you in the way of skillful and godly Wisdom [which is comprehensive insight into the ways and purposes of God];”

But let us look at some of the words that have been translated as wisdom in the Bible. There are three main words in the Bible:

- *Chokmah* (#2451) - to be wise in mind, purpose and act. This Old Testament word tells us that wisdom is “*the knowledge and the ability to make the right choices at the opportune time*” Merrill F Unger & William White; Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words.

The first mention of this word is in relation to the making of the priestly garments for the service of ministry in the Tabernacle. Exodus 28.3 says “So you shall speak to all *who are gifted artisans, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments, to consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest*”

This gives us some insight to why we need wisdom – One of the primary purposes of wisdom is to enable us to serve and minister to God.

- *Sophia* (#4678) – A Greek word found in the New Testament which literally means 'to see through'. *Sophia* is 'the ability to discern what is happening and to look ahead with hope to a good end'. Thayer writes about this word - wisdom which is “*broad and full of intelligence; used of the knowledge of very diverse matters*” Joseph Henry Thayer; Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.
- *Phronesis* (#5428) – Another New Testament word which means 'understanding'. John B Lightfoot* says that '*phronesis* is practical wisdom'. This is acting on what has been received and understood.
*W E Vine (Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words) quotes Lightfoot under his entry for *Wisdom* but there is no reference to which of Lightfoot's works this quotation comes from.

Matthew 7.24

“*Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock*”

He who hears the word of God and acts on them is a wise person, acting in true wisdom.

So we can confidently say that true wisdom is the ability to accurately discern, judge and act on God's principles.

Wisdom directs the course of our lives: It

- affects our attitudes and behaviour
- directs our thoughts
- determines our choices
- controls our tongue
- guides our steps
- protects our ways

Of course Proverbs which extols the virtues of wisdom also connects it to the Word of God.

Proverbs 4.1-13

Proverbs 4.20-27

Proverbs 2.1-22

Proverbs 3.1-8

Proverbs 3.13-24

Proverbs 5.1-2, 7

Proverbs 7.1-4