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Where Do We Find Wisdom?

Proverbs 9:1: (NASB) *Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out her seven pillars.*

All you have to do is look around - what do you see? There is knowledge, there is technology, and there are people, places and things. We rush and we are impatient. We want what we want now. We text, but we don't talk. We type, but we don't write. We have "friends," but we don't touch. We have families, but we are not familiar. We build our dreams around ourselves, but we are lonely. Why is there such a massive and growing disconnect between our lives and our contentment? It is because we are not wise! We are smart, we are even savvy, but we are not wise and this is a problem!

What happened to us?

 Youth sees wisdom as boring, *Vice Chancellor 2011, Macquarie University (Australia)*

- *As far as young people are concerned, wisdom is the province of ghost whisperers, extraterrestrials like Mr. Spock the Vulcan from Star Trek, and wizened Kung Fu sages: "Your body is the arrow; your spirit is the bow, Grasshopper." Wise people are not only seen as old, alien, and weird but also bookish, risk adverse and unemotional. No wonder young people ignore their pearls of wisdom.*

Our perception of wisdom is that it is boring and not updated! **The Scriptures explain what happened to us:** Romans 1:18-23: The human race had ample opportunity to know and understand the massive creative ability of God. The strength, order and complexity of all of creation are before the brightest minds of men and yet all they see is their own thinking and their own doing and take all the credit for their discoveries. Man's professions of wisdom have taken the sacred human creation in God's image and reduced it to just another animal. In so doing, we have removed heavenly accountability and replaced it with an ever-changing subjective morality. "Subjective morality" occurs when the morality by which you will act changes depending on the circumstances. What is deemed "right" changes.

Romans 1:24-25: With this earthborn and sin-laden brand of "wisdom," the inevitable outcome is to serve self - to find the lowest common denominator of degradation and proclaim that everyone can be truly equal and important! And so, here we are. We have arrived at a place of information, power, speed and greed. All this and no peace or wisdom among us! Where can we find wisdom, for when we find it peace will surely follow?

Wisdom is available - we just need to be open to its deepest source: Proverbs 9:1-6

A "Rick" definition: *Wisdom is experience, observation and knowledge applied through the lens of integrity, justice and mercy.*

So, what are the "seven pillars" on which wisdom resides?

First, let's look at a text that defines *wisdom from above*: James 3:13-18: What we do reflects the wisdom that we apply.

It is interesting there are seven descriptions of the *wisdom from above*: ¹⁴But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. ¹⁵Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, and devilish. ¹⁶For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first 1) pure, then 2) peaceable, 3) gentle, 4) willing to yield, 5) full of mercy and good fruits, 6) without a trace of partiality 7) or hypocrisy. ¹⁸And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.

Think about the source of the wisdom that you are applying! We hope it is coming from God's word.

Now let's look at a text that focuses on personal application of godly principles: 2 Peter 1:3-9: By God's divine power, we have been given everything we need for godliness as long as we apply ourselves. Again, the contrast between what we run from and what we are to run towards is important - seven more to add to the list to gain wisdom: ⁵For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with 1) goodness, and goodness with 2) knowledge, ⁶and knowledge with 3) self-control, and self-control with 4) endurance, and

endurance with 5) godliness, ⁷and godliness with 6) mutual affection, and mutual affection with 7) love. ⁸For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹For anyone who lacks these things is nearsighted and blind, and is forgetful of the cleansing of past sins.

Each of these lists contains seven traits and seemingly puts them in a specific order. Because the James text directly relates these to God's wisdom and Peter relates them to the application of spiritual knowledge, could we not look at them together as seven pillars of wisdom?

What godly wisdom is:	How it is applied:
JAMES 3:17	2 PETER 1:5-7
Pure...	...Goodness (virtue)
Peaceable...	...Knowledge
Gentle...	...Self-control
Willing to yield...	...Endurance
Full of mercy and good fruits...	...Godliness
Without a trace of partiality...	...Mutual affection
Without a trace of hypocrisy...	...Love

The Scripture says God's wisdom is pure - can wisdom ever be impure?

Purity and virtue are the first on these lists for a reason.

Pure: Strongs #53 hagnos (hag-nos'); properly, clean, i.e. (figuratively) innocent, modest, perfect
 God's wisdom cannot be anything but pure. If we are seeking the greatest wisdom available anywhere, it must be the purest wisdom and for that there is only one source.

The mission of Christianity is purification: 1 John 3:2-3: Jesus was and is the perfect example of God's wisdom applied!

Virtue: Strongs #703 arete (ar-et'-ay); manliness (valor), i.e. excellence (intrinsic or attributed)
 Virtue is "moral excellence," meaning doing the right thing even when no one is looking and even when it costs you something. One cannot begin to grasp or even begin to recognize the pure wisdom from above without virtue or else this journey will be corrupted from the start.

Jesus was virtue personified: Philippians 2:6-8: Jesus gave everything he had for the mission he faced instead of his own good.

This describes the beautiful relationship between Father and son before creation: Proverbs 8:22-30: God's wisdom is pure and applied through moral excellence or virtue. There is a very humble quality in this first pillar.



Rules and incentives can backfire, *Our Loss of Wisdom (TED Talk), Barry Schwartz*

- Moral skill is chipped away by an overreliance on rules that deprives us of the opportunity to improvise and learn from our improvisations. And moral will is undermined by an incessant appeal to incentives that destroy our desire to do the right thing. And without intending it, by appealing to rules and incentives we are engaging on a war on wisdom.*

With too many rules and incentives in place, we lose the ability to choose the right way because it is the right way. We dumb down our motivation and act because we can gain something from it. There is no wisdom in our decisions.



Now that we have a pure message received with moral excellence, the next pillar of wisdom is to recognize and comprehend the message:

Godly wisdom is **Peaceable**: **Strong's # 1516** ...we apply it through **Knowledge**: **Strong's #1108**
God's wisdom is peaceable in a very comprehensive sense, for His plan is a plan of peace.

Peaceable: **Strong's #1516** 1) relating to peace 2) peaceable, pacific, loving peace
3) bring peace with it, peaceful, salutary

Luke 2:10-14

Knowledge: **Strong's #1108** gnosis (gno'-sis); knowing (the act), i.e. (by implication) knowledge

A deep and abiding knowledge of God's plan can be transformative - dig deep to know!

2 Timothy 3:14-17 Philippians 4:7

Godly wisdom is **Gentle**: **Strong's #1933** ...we apply it through **Self-control**: **Strong's #1466**

Gentle: **Strong's #1933** epieikes; appropriate, i.e. (by implication) mild: 1) seeming, suitable
2) equitable, fair, mild, gentle

God's wisdom is suitable and equitable, as its basis is justice and mercy. To see it's equitability, we must look at the big picture - the plan from beginning to end:

Zephaniah 3:8-9.

Self-control: **Strong's #1466** egkrateia (eng-krat'-i-ah); self-control (especially continence):
self-control (the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites)

Because godly wisdom is equitable and a long-term proposition, it only makes sense that our application of it must pass through the gates of self-control.

To be a wise steward of God's mysteries we must learn to focus only on the plan and not on our own agenda: John 4:31-34: The bread from heaven was a bigger priority for Jesus.

People often mistake a gentle and kind attitude for weakness. Wisdom understands this and applies the necessary self-control to rise above this miscalculation.

Godly wisdom is willing to **Yield**: **Strong's #2138**...we apply it through **Endurance**: **Strong's #5281**

Willing to yield: **Strong's #2138** eupeithes (yoo-pi-thace'); good for persuasion, i.e. (intransitively)
compliant 1) easily obeying, compliant

How can God's wisdom possibly obey or be compliant when it is pure, focused on peace and gentleness? Shouldn't everything have to comply with it? Godly wisdom has a curious combination of an ability to bend along the way where possible for the sake of learning, while it is still firmly focused on and not violating its vision.

1 Samuel 8:4-7: God was compliant to the desires of His people - they were wrong, He knew it, but He saw the power of the experience and went along with it.

Endurance: **Strong's #5281** hupomone (hoop-om-on-ay'); cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy:
steadfastness, constancy, endurance

Once we understand God's wisdom bends for the sake of teaching, though it never denies its own purpose, we realize the world will look at this and revile us for worshipping a God who allows killing, evil and innocent people to suffer. It is here that our steadfast endurance must carry us through. We must be patient as God is patient. 1 Peter 4:12-14

Godly wisdom is full of **Mercy** **Strong's #1656** and good fruits: ...We apply it through **Godliness**: **Strong's #2150**

Mercy: **Strong's #1656** eleos (el'-eh-os); compassion (human or divine, especially active)

God knows that his human creation has a voracious appetite for experience and in His wisdom He has provided for that appetite to be filled within the context of sin. This allows the wisdom of His mercy to not only shine forth, but eventually be seen and embraced by all whom so choose! 2 Samuel 12:10-13

Godliness: **Strong's #2150** eusebeia (yoo-seb'-i-ah); piety 1) reverence, respect
2) piety towards God, godliness



Upon seeing the examples of the bending, complying and mercy of God’s wisdom and its ability to, in spite of all these things, bear fruit, it can be tempting to relax and rely on God’s mercy to “bail us out.” Not so! Wisdom demands godliness! Romans 6:1-4

Godly wisdom is without a trace of **Partiality**: **Strongs #87**: ...We apply it through **Mutual Affection**: **Strongs #5360**

Partiality: **Strongs #87** adiakritos; 1) undistinguished, unintelligible
2) without dubiousness, ambiguity or uncertainty

The power of the wisdom of God is truly expressed through its unambiguous end game for His plan. Jesus was the ransom for Adam and **all men were under Adam, therefore all men will be under Christ**. Many Old Testament prophecies speak of this end. Psalms 72:17-19

Affection: **Strongs #5360** philadelphia (fil-ad-el-fee'-ah); fraternal affection

With this wise and clear plan before us, we **MUST** break down the barriers between us and work together to spread the “Good News!” We have to be humble enough to be a contributor and not always having to do it our own way. Galatians 3:26-29

Godly wisdom is without a trace of **Hypocrisy**: **Strongs #505**
...We apply it through **Love**: **Strongs #26**

Without **Hypocrisy**: **Strongs #505** anupokritos (an-oo-pok'-ree-tos); unfeigned, undisguised, sincere

This final pillar of wisdom brings us back to the first - the pillar of **Purity**. Not only is God’s wisdom unadulterated, it is comprehensive, just, merciful and complete, all because of God’s love for His creation. God’s wisdom is utter and completely sincere - He does it because He means it!

Love: **Strongs #26** agape (ag-ah'-pay); love, i.e. affection or benevolence; specially (plural) a love-feast

We must grasp this sincere wisdom from above and be so taken by it that we will not hold back anything for selfish gain, but rather in benevolent love we will live our Christian calling.

Wisdom says when we do fall, we brush ourselves off and figure out how to avoid that same action in the future.

John 15:11-13,17

Godly wisdom is a transformative action so that we can put our life in order.

*So, where do we find wisdom?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*