



Wisdom Gained

God's wisdom is found in fearing and obeying Him.

JOB 28:12-28

MEMORY VERSE: JOB 28:28

STUDY Job 28:12-28 to see how Job responded to additional words from his friends and addressed the question of where wisdom can be found. Highlight Job's conclusion to his question that true wisdom is found in fearing God and turning to Him in repentance and obedience. Examine 1 Corinthians 1:24-25; Colossians 2:3; and James 1:5 as support for this study.

CREATE a teaching plan for your group using the ideas on pages 50–52. Focus on the Source of wisdom for all believers that is only found in God, revealed through studying His Word and the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

GATHER the following items:

- Extra Personal Study Guides (PSGs)
- Someone in the group who can study and summarize **Pack Item 12** (*Handout: Wisdom Poetry*) during the session

Prepare to Display:

- Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of Job and Ecclesiastes*)

Make Copies of:

- Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark*)
- Pack Item 12** (*Handout: Wisdom Poetry*)

CONSULT the weekly Explore the Bible adult podcast to gain insights on the go about this week's study on Ministry Grid, Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, Spotify, LifeWay's Digital Pass, or at goExploreTheBible.com/adults-training.

REINFORCE the study by contacting individuals in the group who are facing difficult circumstances. Draw insights from the current study of Job to encourage them.

KEY DOCTRINE

Scripture

The Bible is a perfect treasure of divine instruction (Deut. 4:1-2).

FIRST THOUGHTS

People today are seeking words of wisdom and dependable counsel concerning how to navigate life's challenges. We may search the Internet looking for the right piece of advice or help we need. We may fill our bookshelves or eReaders with self-help books. While it is true others may offer helpful advice in life, the Bible reveals that the source and goal of wisdom is God; true wisdom comes from Him and leads to Him. Job 28:12-28 emphasizes this truth.

(In PSG, p. 37) **How might a person determine if the advice he or she is getting has merit? How do we know we can trust the source for wisdom?**

BIBLE SKILL

Review cross reference verses to gain insight.

Review the following verses that support the same conclusion as Job: Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10; Ecclesiastes 12:13; and Isaiah 8:11-13. Note similar words and phrases. How does each passage give us a different view of the fear of God? How would you summarize the teaching of these passages in one sentence?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

JOB 22:1–31:40

Job's friends did not let up, they had reached their verdict. Job must be guilty. What was their evidence? It came down to the fact that Job had experienced extreme suffering. According to them, his sin had brought all of this about. In fact, chapter 22 lays out the case as plain as it can be. Again, according to his mistaken friends, Job's circumstances revealed his hidden evil, and he needed to repent. Job's reply in chapters 23–24 landed the responsibility on God, who had chosen him as an instrument of suffering. Bildad attempted to reply in chapter 25, but Job abruptly interrupted him and further asserted that an explanation of the trial was ultimately hidden in divine mystery. Job's friends had no more arguments or comfort to offer him.

Job's friends became silent after their final plea. Job, however, had more to say. In chapter 28, he launched off on a monologue and offered a profound reflection on God's wisdom, utilizing all of creation as points in his speech. In the last three chapters of this section (chaps. 29–31), the reader is set up for Job's final case. Job began with reflection on his blessed life before tragedy (chap. 29), only to follow it with a searing protest about his dreadful present situation (chap. 30). From here, Job offered one final protest of his innocence and then fell into silence himself (chap. 31).

Job and his friends exhausted their verbal ammunition and argued themselves further apart. One thing is clear, Job realized that neither him nor his friends had any wisdom to offer in this matter. Therefore, his only hope was to be able to stand before God to be vindicated (23:1-17). Job and his friends explored all the human wisdom available. Now the question was where wisdom could be found. This lesson in humility is important

for the reader. As we have seen before, God does not always reveal the reasons for His activity. Even in the things God does reveal, He often does not exhaustively reveal His plans. Certainly, what God chooses to reveal is sufficient. For those who have learned to trust in Him, that should be enough.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

VALUED (JOB 28:12-19)

Verses 12-19

But where can wisdom be found, and where is understanding located?

This question is at the heart of almost all human endeavors to uncover the mysteries of the universe. The search for wisdom has driven philosophers and scientists to the highest peaks of human achievement. Yet, all the human ability in the world put forth in the efforts to find wisdom will end in futility. In essence, no human has the ability to discover wisdom in his or her own power independent of God.

The wisdom of God is beyond our comprehension. It cannot be purchased with any human resources. In fact, Job argued that no one even knows its **value**. Building his case, Job listed the most precious resources mined from the earth and showed their inadequacy to pay the price for wisdom (vv. 15-19). Neither **gold, silver, onyx, lapis lazuli, coral, quartz, pearls, or topaz** can compare to the value of wisdom. This is a point with which the teacher of Ecclesiastes would certainly nod in agreement.

It is instructive to read this section of the text in the context of the arguments of Job's friends. They claimed that Job loved God because of the gifts that he possessed. As we have seen, all of these gifts had been taken away from Job. In 22:21-26, Eliphaz accused Job of loving gold and silver more than God. Underneath all of these arguments was the insinuation that Job was greedy, presumably this could be the sin his friends suspected of Job. However, Job defended his innocence the entire time and never indicated that he struggled with greed. His friends based their arguments on a wrong premise, and Job had been trying to show them their mistake the whole time. The comparison between wealth and wisdom is a thread that can be located in many places in the Bible.

The Book of Proverbs, which is also classified as wisdom literature along with the Book of Job, compares wealth and wisdom as well. Just like Job, the writer of Proverbs teaches that wisdom cannot be purchased with wealth. Even still, we understand that sometimes wisdom does lead to wealth. However, that is not the lesson to be learned here. In Proverbs 8:18-19, we read: "With me are riches and honor, lasting wealth and righteousness. My fruit is better than solid gold, and my harvest than pure silver."

Wisdom literature is primarily focused on wise living and is application driven. All the wealth in the world cannot buy wisdom, which is a crown of honor. Wisdom cannot be purchased, nor can it be found by

VERSES 12-19

¹² But where can wisdom be found, and where is understanding located?

¹³ No one can know its value, since it cannot be found in the land of the living. ¹⁴ The ocean depths say, "It's not

in me," while the sea declares, "I don't have it." ¹⁵ Gold cannot be exchanged for it, and silver cannot be weighed out for its price.

¹⁶ Wisdom cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx or lapis lazuli. ¹⁷ Gold and glass do not compare with it, and articles of fine gold cannot be exchanged for it. ¹⁸ Coral and quartz are not worth mentioning. The price of wisdom is beyond pearls.

¹⁹ Topaz from Cush cannot compare with it, and it cannot be valued in pure gold.

human exploration. Wisdom does not reside in the “land of the living” or in the deepest depths of the sea (28:13b-14). In the ancient world, bodies of water were often regarded as the personification of chaos and evil. Whether in good or evil, order or chaos, the wisdom of God cannot be found by human ingenuity. The wise person, according to the inspired writers of wisdom literature, values and treasures godly wisdom over all worldly treasure and earthly exploits.

The implicit command here to treasure divine wisdom reflects the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:19-21, with a reminder that where our treasure is, there our hearts will be also. Job seems to have understood this, even though his friends claimed that his treasure amounted of worldly things. Like Job, we should treasure the Giver above the gifts. This is true wisdom.

Why is the wisdom of God more valuable than earthly treasures and human ingenuity?

HIDDEN (JOB 28:20-22)

Verses 20-22

Verse 20 begins like verse 12. *Where then does wisdom come from, and where is understanding located?* Job began by proclaiming that wisdom is invaluable compared to earthly wealth, and it is inaccessible by human abilities. In this section, Job turned his attention to the entirety of creation. Not only is wisdom hidden from the creatures who dwell on the earth, it is also elusive to the creatures of the sky. Even *birds*, who have the highest vantage point, cannot find wisdom. No creature is equipped for this task! The usage of creation in Job’s argument was a genius move on his part. In it he effectively closed his case that creatures cannot find all of the answers they are looking for in the theater of creation. This type of wisdom is found somewhere else.

When looking in all the wrong places, the search for wisdom can bring someone to despair.

Job then drew the readers’ attention below the earth, to *Abaddon and Death*. *Abaddon* is a parallel to the grave. In the Old Testament, it means the place of utter ruin, death, desolation, or destruction (Ps. 88:11; Prov. 15:11). In Revelation 9:11, *Abaddon* is depicted as a bottomless pit. Essentially Job was saying, regardless of how high (birds) or low (grave) you go, the

VERSES 20-22

²⁰ Where then does wisdom come from, and where is understanding located? ²¹ It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing and concealed from the birds of the sky. ²² Abaddon and Death say, “We have heard news of it with our ears.”

wisdom of God cannot be obtained. This sentiment is often expressed today when someone (even a non-Christian) says, “if only I could see the whole picture.” Or more grimly, “perhaps all will be revealed to me after I am dead.” When looking in all the wrong places, the search for wisdom can bring someone to despair. It is a difficult lesson to come to terms with what Job argued in verses 21-22, namely, that the creatures of earth, heaven, and the underworld cannot grasp true wisdom and therefore, cannot guide anyone to its source. However, we also understand that the wise person searches for godly wisdom.

Why do people often long for a “higher vantage point” in their search for understanding? Why do people find comfort in the hope that all of their questions will be answered in the life to come?

FOUND (JOB 28:23-27)

Verses 23-24

After Job led the reader on a search for wisdom, both high and low, and consulted all of earth’s creatures, he proclaimed that God alone knows where to find wisdom. Only God ***understands the way to wisdom***. God is the only one who ***knows its location***. People cannot find wisdom in the skies over the earth. They cannot find wisdom in the depths under the earth. But God has the vantage point to see all, to ***the ends of the earth***. He ***sees everything under the heavens***.

Verses 25-27

The truth stated in verses 23-24 is now grounded in the doctrine of creation. As almighty Creator, God alone knows where wisdom has been placed. After all, it was God who ***fixed the weight of the wind and distributed the water by measure***. Likewise, it was God who ***established a limit for the rain and a path for the lightning***. Because God has established the order of creation, He alone can reveal wisdom to humanity. It is important to remind ourselves that everything God has revealed is an act of His grace. The creator God is not bound to reveal wisdom to any of His creatures. Yet, He chooses to do so in love. Even though He does not reveal all things exhaustively, what He does reveal is sufficient for all of life and godliness. While God reveals His wisdom to those who faithfully seek Him, that does not mean He will reveal all the reasons behind what happens to us and around us.

We must learn to trust Him in the things He has not revealed or the things we cannot understand. Ultimately, this comes down to our understanding of the character of God. If we believe God is good and loving,

VERSES 23-24

²³ But God understands the way to wisdom, and he knows its location.

²⁴ For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.

VERSES 25-27

²⁵ When God fixed the weight of the wind and distributed the water by measure, ²⁶ when he established a limit for the rain and a path for the lightning, ²⁷ he considered wisdom and evaluated it; he established it and examined it.

we can be comfortable with mystery. If we believe that God is all wise, then we can submit ourselves to His providential hand. We must learn like Job that only God is the source of true wisdom. Moreover, God’s wisdom is seen in His creative work. If the heavens declare the glory of God, can we not also declare His benevolence? True wisdom belongs to God alone. If we do not proclaim this truth, then the rocks of the earth will cry out in our place (Luke 19:40).

How does our struggle to come to terms with mystery reveal our level of trust in God?

*If we believe God is good and loving,
we can be comfortable with mystery.*

OFFERED (JOB 28:28)

Verse 28

VERSE 28

²⁸ He said to mankind, “The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom. And to turn from evil is understanding.”

It has become clear throughout our text that true wisdom not only belongs to God but is also found only in God. What then is the key to accessing this wisdom? To answer this question, Job utilized a phrase that is common in biblical wisdom literature, namely, that wisdom is found in **the fear of the Lord**. (See also Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; Job 28:28; Eccl. 12:13.) This theme is common in all of Scripture. The Law of Moses cites the fear of God as a reason to treat the disabled and elderly well (Lev. 19:14,32). Moses chose leaders on the basis that they feared God and wouldn’t take bribes (Ex. 18:21). Moses also told the Israelites that God met with them in a terrifying display of His power so that they wouldn’t sin (Ex. 20:20). Even in the New Testament, we are told that the chief sin of mankind is “there no fear of God” (Rom. 3:18).

In Job 28:28, the word translated **Lord** is the Hebrew word *Adonai*, which was often voiced as a replacement for *Yahweh* by ancient Jews when reading or praying Scripture. The qualifying sentence, **to turn from evil is understanding**, indicates that wisdom is found in fearing God and turning away from evil. Once again, the fear of God is linked to a moral command. In the case of Job, it seems that he was primarily focused on one’s respectful attitude or subservient relationship to God, which is expressed in pursuing holiness or an aversion to evil.

The concept of fearing God and turning away from evil is important for understanding the Book of Job as a whole. Job’s friends assumed that he had done something evil, though he maintained his innocence. In the

last session, we followed Job’s plea with his friends to beware of wrongly ascribing evil to him, which was evil itself and would bring about judgment on them. In sum, the fear of God is a deep reverence brought about by the presence of God, who is vastly more powerful than any human being. The fear of God is a humble posture of submissive reverence.

God created us to stand in awe of Him and keep His commandments.

True wisdom, then, begins with the fear of God. To fear God is to stand in awe of Him. God is the almighty Creator; we are mere creatures. God is sovereign; we are dependent. God is holy; we are sinners. As we have already seen in Scripture, we demonstrate that we fear God by keeping His commandments. If we acknowledge God as our King, we will naturally seek to do what He says. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commands” (John 14:15). The writer of Ecclesiastes wrote that “this is for all humanity” (Eccl. 12:13). That verse reads literally that fearing God and keeping His commandments “is the whole of everyone.” It’s not just our duty, it’s our essence. God created us to stand in awe of Him and keep His commandments. That’s the way to fulfill God’s plan for us. If God created us, He certainly knows what is best for us because it leads to repentance of sin and the pursuit of righteous living.

All of us have failed to fear God rightly and thus to live the perfectly wise life. There is only One who has walked the earth in perfect wisdom, and that is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the wisdom of God for us (1 Cor. 1:18-24). What we see then, is that the Christian life does not rest in the wisdom of man (a theme that Job explores thoroughly) but in the power of God.

Would those who know you say that you are a “God fearer”? If so, why do they make that claim of your life?

LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION

INTRODUCE: As the group begins to arrive, comment: *Each day we are surrounded by all types of advice about what is good for us to eat, how to take care of our health, the best car to drive, what investments to make, or how to raise our kids. In an age of endless information, discerning true wisdom can be challenging.*

ASK: *How might a person determine if the advice he or she is getting has merit? How do we know we can trust the source for wisdom?* (PSG, p. 37)

TRANSITION: *Throughout our study of Job, we've seen Job struggle to defend himself in the face of criticism from his friends and his wife. He has maintained his innocence and his devotion to God. In today's study, he continues to seek God and addresses a vital question for all of us: Where can wisdom be found?*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

REVIEW: Utilizing **Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of Job and Ecclesiastes*), indicate that the study today is the third round of discourses by Job's friends. Briefly relate that in both the first and second discourses Job's friends have said that he must have sinned and fallen away from his faith to have such harsh judgment from God. Each time Job responded with words that show that although he has many questions and things he doesn't understand, he is confident in his faith.

OVERVIEW: Using *Understand the Context* (pp. 44–45) provide a brief summary of Job 22:1–31:40.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Job 28:12**, as the group listens for Job's question.

ASK: *What are some sources a person may turn to when seeking wisdom? What makes the quest for wisdom daunting and frustrating for some?* (PSG, p. 39)

EXAMINE: Summarize verse 12 from page 45 of this book: "All the human ability in the world put forth in the efforts to find wisdom will end in futility. In essence, no human has the ability to discover wisdom in his or her own power independent of God."

EXPLAIN: *In the next few verses in Job 28, Job expressed his thoughts on the value of wisdom.*

READ: Direct someone to read aloud **Job 28:13-19**, guiding the group to look for where wisdom can't be found.

PARAPHRASE: Lead the group to turn to a neighbor and paraphrase verses 13-14.

DISCUSS: *How did Job compare the value of wisdom with precious metals or jewels?*

STATE: *Wisdom cannot be found on earth, so it is impossible to estimate its value. Wisdom can't come from even the purest gold and finest jewels, yet we often put so much effort into earthly treasures.*

ASK: *What is evidence that a believer values wisdom from God more than anything else?* (PSG, p. 40)

READ: Read aloud **Job 28:20-22** as the group compares verse 20 to verse 12.

ASK: *Why do people search for wisdom in the wrong places?* (PSG, p. 42)

EXPLAIN: *Job explained that wisdom is hidden from the living and the dead. Neither are able to grasp true wisdom or determine the true source of wisdom. The wise person searches for godly wisdom.*

GUIDE: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 12** (*Handout: Wisdom Poetry*) to the group. Allow time for the person who studied the item to share what he or she learned. Then highlight the following quote: “it seems that the real essence of wisdom is spiritual, for life is more than just living by a set of rules and being rewarded in some physical manner.” Ask: ***What experiences in your life have shown this to be true? How did Job display this fact in his life?***

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Job 28:23-27**.

DISCUSS: Divide the group into three teams. Assign each team one of the following passages from the New Testament: 1 Corinthians 1:24-25; Colossians 2:3; and James 1:5. Direct each team to be prepared to relate how their passages would answer Job’s question. Instruct them to read the comments in the PSG under Verses 23-27 (pp. 42–43) for clarification.

HIGHLIGHT: Emphasize the statement on page 43 of the PSG: *One day God will enable us to see everything clearly and to fully understand His purposes.*

DISCUSS: ***How does this statement give you hope when you struggle to know how to proceed in a challenging situation? Why is submission to God and His sovereignty over all creation as the Creator essential to having true wisdom?*** (PSG, p. 43)

READ: Direct someone to read aloud **Job 28:28**, while the group listens for Job’s conclusion.

REMINDE: Draw attention to **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark*) distributed in an earlier session, noting that Job 28:28 is a verse to carry in our hearts as we seek God’s wisdom.

ASK: ***How does the “fear of the Lord” and “to turn from evil” define wisdom and understanding?*** (PSG, p. 44)

TRANSITION: *Wisdom begins with a right relationship with God and acknowledging His sovereignty over everything.*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Call for a volunteer to read aloud the Summary Statements under Apply the Text (PSG, p. 45). Invite the group to contemplate living out these statements as believers. Ask: ***Which of these challenges you the most today? Explain.***

CHALLENGE: Guide the group to reflect on their own lives and ask themselves if others would see evidence of God’s wisdom in their lives. Then ask them to reflect on the following question: ***Evaluate the role the Bible plays in your search for wisdom. What actions do you need to take to greater depend on the Bible for wisdom?*** (PSG, p. 45)

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking the Lord for His presence with us through the Holy Spirit. Ask that He would open our eyes to His wisdom and let our actions reflect His guidance.

OPTIONS

Use these options to supplement and enhance the group plans on the previous pages.

MUSIC

To energize your group and reinforce the study of Job, play a recording of the children's song, "W-I-S-D-O-M," produced by Sovereign Grace Music with the music and lyrics by Zach Jones. Prior to the session enlist one person to lead the group in singing the chorus and bridge sections.

PHYSICAL/RELATIONAL

Gather index cards and pencils.

Distribute index cards to each person and direct them to write a definition for *wisdom*. After the definitions are written, direct everyone to find a partner not sitting beside them to share their definitions. Guide the group of pairs to join another group to form a team of four. Provide an index card for each team and ask them to write a definition together that summarizes their individual definitions. Allow time for each team to share.

ART

Gather construction paper or chenille sticks.

Provide each person in the group with a small piece of construction paper or a chenille stick. Direct the group to either tear their construction paper or form their chenille stick into the shape of something that people today consider very valuable. Remind the group that it is OK if they are the only ones who can recognize their creation. Make a list of things that the group perceives that today's world considers valuable.

DRAMA

Prior to the session enlist one person to portray Job in a dramatic reading of Job 28:12-28. Coach the volunteer to emphasize Job's repeated question concerning wisdom. The monologue could be broken into several parts as each section is addressed during the group time or used in its entirety to reinforce and summarize the study.

OBJECT LESSON

Gather several self-help books.

Display the gathered self-help books where they are visible as the group arrives. Direct the group to indicate if they have ever bought or checked out from the library a self-help book. Share that people are always looking for information on ways to improve themselves. Relate that sometimes sources provide exceptionally good advice for life's circumstances, but that's not always the case. Emphasize that there is only one source that always provides truthful, accurate guidance, and that source is God's Word. Call for volunteers to share how they incorporate reading and studying God's Word into their daily lives.