



Wisdom Gained

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

JOB 28:12-28

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.

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?

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

JOB 22:1–31:40

This section of the Book of Job contains the third and final cycle of Job's conversations with his friends. Eliphaz concluded that abominable behavior could be the only explanation for Job's suffering. He contended that Job was paying for his sins and in danger of being completely destroyed (Job 22:1-20). However, Eliphaz believed there was still hope for Job. If Job would only come to terms with God, then God would restore him (22:21-30).

In Job's response to Eliphaz in chapters 23–24, he maintained his innocence and devotion to God, expressing his desire to plead his case face to face with God. Job was convinced God would pay attention to him and put an end to his suffering. On the other hand, Job resigned himself to recognizing God will do whatever He desires, a thought that terrified Job in his present condition. Job then questioned why the wicked appear to prosper while the weak suffer. Nonetheless, while Job's faith in God's justice may have momentarily wavered, it remained intact.

Bildad's final response to Job is in chapter 25. In these six verses, Bildad espoused God's power and majesty in contrast to the lowly estate of humanity. He contended that people are but maggots and worms before God, a view that contradicts God's Word. (See Ps. 8.) It seems Job cut Bildad off at this point, apparently having heard enough of his friends' counsel. Zophar didn't even get an opportunity to speak.

Chapters 26-31 contains Job's last retort to his friends. Job demonstrated he knew everything his friends knew. He acknowledged the transcendent power, majesty, and justice of God that they repeatedly declared. Be that as it may, it did not change the fact that Job was innocent of every accusation his friends made, and more importantly, he was innocent before God.

As you read Job 28:12-28, look for how fearing God and obeying Him provides a firm foundation when facing life's challenges. How would you describe the value of finding true wisdom?

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

VALUED (JOB 28:12-19)

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.

VERSES 12-19

Verse 12 introduces perhaps the central passage of the Book of Job. The answers to all of life’s questions and the meaning of life are wrapped up in wisdom. True wisdom is characterized by the fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7). It recognizes God as both the source and goal of wisdom. It recognizes God as the Creator and that He created everything and everyone to bring glory to Him. It is the realization that God is working all things according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28).

Since God has a concern for all things, people should acknowledge Him and submit to Him in every aspect of their lives. Anyone can acquire wisdom with some effort and experience. However, in this verse Job raised the question, *where can wisdom be found?*

**What are some sources a person may turn to when seeking wisdom?
What makes the quest for wisdom daunting and frustrating for some?**

In verses 1-11, Job recognized that with strenuous effort and perseverance, people were able to cut out channels in rocks and find the most valuable, precious metals and gemstones on earth. As impressive as that accomplishment may have been, there was something more precious and valuable that humanity could not find

on its own: **wisdom** and **understanding**, which should be understood as two ways of referring to a single concept. Job was not referring to having a skill, being shrewd, or having an impressive intellect or common sense. He was referring to a kind of wisdom that is unattainable by humanity's own efforts. No one could estimate its value because it is impossible to find on this earth. It does not derive from this earth. Even if a person could have plunged into the **ocean depths**, he or she would not have found it there. People knew where to find **gold** and **silver** and precious stones, but they did not know where to find wisdom.

DID YOU KNOW?

The gold of Ophir (Job 28:16) was the rarest and most treasured gold in the ancient Near East (Isa. 13:12). It was the gold of Ophir with which queens adorned themselves (Ps. 45:9). Though believed to be somewhere in Arabia, the exact location of ancient Ophir is unclear.

Even the prized **onyx** that had a place in the breastplate of the high priest of Israel and was the treasure of kings along with **lapis lazuli** was not enough. Not even the most finely adorned gold vessels or jewelry would work. **Coral** probably refers to a black, white, or pinkish limestone that artisans used along with **quartz** to make valuable adornments, and it did not measure up. Though probably rare and thus quite valuable in Job's day, the price of wisdom surpassed that of **pearls**. Finally, the value of **topaz**, a prized yellow gemstone found in **Cush**, which was ancient Ethiopia, did not compare to the worth of wisdom (v. 19).

What is evidence that a believer values wisdom from God more than anything else?

HIDDEN (JOB 28:20-22)

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.”

VERSES 20-22

Once again, Job reiterated the question similar to the one he raised in verse 12. The previous verses emphasized that wisdom is priceless and cannot be found on earth. This section underscores the truth that no one on earth knows the source of wisdom or the way to wisdom.

Typical of writing in the Old Testament, Job’s answer moved from a general answer to one that was more specific. He began by asserting that the source of wisdom was ***hidden from the eyes of every living thing***. Neither man nor beast could answer his question. Then he gave a more specific answer, referring to ***the birds of the sky***. Birds are generally known for excellent vision. Birds of prey stand out, especially eagles which are able to see small prey from a far distance. So Job declared that no living creature, not even those with exceptional eyesight, are able to see where wisdom comes from or its location. Consequently, even if people act as if they are the source of this wisdom, as Job accused his friends of doing, it is not true (12:2).

Job poetically personified two realities that have accompanied humanity from the very beginning in the garden of Eden, ***Abaddon and Death***. *Abaddon* means “destruction,” and destruction and death have accompanied humanity ever since Adam and Eve sinned against God. When Adam and Eve sinned, their fellowship with God was destroyed, signified by their hiding from Him in the garden as well as covering themselves before Him. Their immediate access to the tree of life was denied as they were banished from the garden. Moreover, they became spiritually dead and bodily mortal as they began dying physically. Death entered with sin.

Job was essentially saying that if these longtime associates of humanity could talk, they might have heard about wisdom, but even they do not know the answer to Job’s question. It’s like they were saying, “We’ve heard of wisdom somewhere along the way but just can’t recollect what we heard.” Wisdom is hidden from both the living and the dead.

Why do people search for wisdom in the wrong places?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Scripture*

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

FOUND (JOB 28:23-27)

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. 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.

VERSES 23-27

Job emphatically stated that God alone *understands the way to wisdom* and knows where it is because nothing is hidden from Him. From the beginning in creation God considered it, declared it, established it, and examined it. Everything in creation exists or does not exist and lives or dies according to God's wisdom. All true wisdom comes from Him.

One might conclude that given the hiddenness of wisdom as Job described it, God does not want us to find wisdom or wants to make it difficult to discover. This is untrue. The fact that God has revealed His wisdom in His Word indicates His desire for us to have it. In the New Testament, James indicates that those who in faith ask God for wisdom will receive it (Jas. 1:5-8). Moreover, the apostle Paul revealed that Jesus Himself is "the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24).

The wisdom of God is granted to those who seek Christ, to those whom He has redeemed (Eph. 1:7-10). In Christ, God has granted believers wisdom concerning God's plan and purpose. Believers must remember that in the present we are able to "see only a reflection as in a mirror" (1 Cor. 13:12), meaning God has not revealed to us all the

reasons behind what happens to us and around us. Our understanding in all things is limited and imperfect. Job himself is an example of this truth. While the reader of the Book of Job is privy to the reason Job suffered as he did, Job was not. However, one day God will enable us to see everything clearly and to fully understand His purposes. In the meantime, by the help of the Holy Spirit, God gives believers the insight to understand the gospel, God’s Word, and His will for us in the present as well as a glimpse of the future.

Why is submission to God and His sovereignty over all creation as the Creator essential to having true wisdom?

One day God will enable us to see everything clearly and to fully understand His purposes.

OFFERED (JOB 28:28)

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

VERSE 28

So far, Job addressed the value of wisdom, the hiddenness of wisdom, and the source of wisdom, which is God Himself. However, it is not until he came to the conclusion of his thoughts concerning wisdom that he divulged what true wisdom actually is. Wisdom is ***the fear of the Lord***. To *fear* the Lord means having such awe of Him that it affects how one lives. It precipitates a desire to know God and leads to a reverence for God. It involves a trusting submission to God that seeks to know His Word and obey it, accepting God’s will and worshiping Him alone. The idea of submitting to God is highlighted by the word *Lord*. In Hebrew, it is the word, *Adonai*, meaning “lord” or “master.” While today we may find it difficult to comprehend the idea of having a master, in ancient times people understood that submitting to a master meant acknowledging the master had the

right to do whatever he wanted, while the servant existed for the purpose of submissively serving the will of the master in all things.

Practically speaking, wisdom is living all of life unto God, acknowledging Him in everything. As a result, wisdom is knowing the right thing, doing the right thing, doing it in the right way, at the right time, and to the right extent. Furthermore, the fear of the Lord—wisdom—not only involves knowing what is right but also having an understanding of what is wrong. The person who has wisdom and understanding clings to what is good and turns away from that which is evil. This includes avoiding sin but also repenting of sin when we have fallen into it.

How does the “fear of the Lord” and “to turn from evil” define wisdom and understanding?

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?

APPLY THE TEXT

- The wise person values and treasures godly wisdom.
- The wise person searches for godly wisdom.
- True wisdom belongs to God alone.
- True wisdom consists of fearing God and produces a godly life.

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?

Discuss with your group the value of God's wisdom. What can the group do to help others value God's wisdom as well?

Memorize Job 28:28. Reflect on the relationship between fearing God and turning from evil. Record experiences through the week where you lived out the truth of this verse.

PRAYER NEEDS
