

Charted Waters
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Proverbs 1:7-19

If you go to a dictionary or thesaurus you'll find that "wisdom" and "knowledge" are synonyms. They may be synonymous in literature but not in life. **How would you describe the difference between knowledge and wisdom?**

- You need knowledge to be wise, but you can have knowledge and NOT be wise. *"Wisdom takes knowledge and applies it with discernment."*ⁱ
- It has been said, *"Knowledge is knowing what to say. Wisdom is knowing when to say it."* It has also been said, *"Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is knowing not to put it in the fruit salad."*ⁱⁱ
- That's wisdom from man but "worldly wisdom has its limitations.

In 1 Corinthians 3:18–20 (ESV) the Apostle Paul writes:

¹⁸ Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. ¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," ²⁰ and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."

- Followers of Christ shouldn't settle for only having "worldly wisdom." Our goal should be to live by Godly wisdom.
- Some have said that the first verse of our text is the key verse in Proverbs: Proverbs 1:7 (ESV) ⁷ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.
- Proverbs 9:10 (ESV) is similar but adds an element: ¹⁰ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.
- One commentator writing about Godly wisdom said, *"Godly wisdom is, of course, from God and honors God. Godly wisdom starts with the fear of God and results in a holy life. Worldly wisdom, on the other hand, is not concerned with honoring God but with pleasing oneself. With worldly wisdom, we may become educated, street-smart, and have "common sense" that enables us to play the world's game successfully. Godly wisdom enables us to prepare ourselves for eternity...Having godly wisdom means we strive to see life from God's perspective and act accordingly."*ⁱⁱⁱ
- Godly wisdom is spread through all of scripture, but there is a concentration of it in the "Wisdom Literature" of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.
- An important "caveat" about Proverbs: "As you study, keep in mind that Hebrew proverbs are generalized statements of what is usually true in life, and they must not be treated like promises. [For example] "A friend loves at all times" (Prov. 17:17, NKJV), but sometimes even the most devoted

friends may have disagreements. “A soft answer turns away wrath” (15:1, NKJV) in most instances, but our Lord’s lamblike gentleness didn’t deliver Him from shame and suffering.”^{iv}

Big Idea of this quarter: God’s people shouldn’t settle for “worldly wisdom,” we must turn to scripture and to God Himself in search of Godly wisdom.

Big Idea of this week’s study: Godly wisdom from God’s word will protect us from having to deal with the consequences of foolish choices.

- Let’s begin as we circle back to verse seven of Proverbs chapter one.

Proverbs 1:7–19 (ESV) — 7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. **8** Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching, **9** for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.

- “Fearing the Lord” in scripture isn’t living in “terror” but in reverence.
- For Christ-followers, God is our Father, Creator, Master, and Savior so we should desire to please Him by being obedient to His will for us.
- To live this way we need wisdom that is “from God and pleases God.”
- **“Fools despise wisdom.”** This kind of “fool” has no use for God or God’s wisdom. We’ve all known someone who continually made foolish choices rejecting any advice or counsel. They might even be highly intelligent but they continue to make bad choices based on what they want at that moment and never think about the consequences.
- We’ve all made foolish choices at one time or another, the advantage a follower of Christ has is the conviction in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.
- A lack of wisdom for both children and adults is often a “hearing” problem.
- Verse eight is a father speaking to his son and it begins with the word “hear” or “listen.” “Three hundred years before Christ, the Greek philosopher Zeno made a statement [quoted by] parents everywhere... *“The reason why we have two ears and only one mouth is that we may listen the more and talk the less.”*^v
- How often have we gotten ourselves into a mess just because we didn’t have “ears to hear” wise counsel?
- Learning begins with listening. This applies to adults as well as children!
- Verses eight and nine portray wisdom being taught by parents to children.
- We have a responsibility to convey Godly wisdom to the next generation and it must be wisdom as valuable as a trophy of honor.
- A “garland” was a wreath worn on the head awarded for winning a competition or a military battle. A “pendant” was hung around the neck to signify a special status. Pharaoh placed a gold pendant around Joseph’s neck to signify his new status (Gen. 41:42.)
- Question: Is the wisdom we are sharing with our kids and other young people as valuable to them as a trophy of honor or just stuff we’ve picked

up from our own experiences in life? Our source for Godly wisdom to share is God's word combined with our life experiences.

- In verse ten Solomon gets right to the fundamental problem of being influenced by sinful people.

10 My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.

- It is wise to influence our kids about their choices in friends, but we can't put them in a bubble. Sooner or later they will encounter the world without us around and we have to help them be ready to resist sinful influences.
- As you read these next verses you might think I picked them because of what's been happening in our country lately. I did not. Lifeway selected this passage for this date many months ago. I'm reading in the NLT:

Proverbs 1:11–19 (NLT) — 11 They may say, “Come and join us. Let's hide and kill someone! Just for fun, let's ambush the innocent! 12 Let's swallow them alive, like the grave; let's swallow them whole, like those who go down to the pit of death. 13 Think of the great things we'll get! We'll fill our houses with all the stuff we take. 14 Come, throw in your lot with us; we'll all share the loot.” 15 My child, don't go along with them! Stay far away from their paths. 16 They rush to commit evil deeds. They hurry to commit murder.

- Those verses seem “ripped from the headlines” of the past two weeks.
- As I prayed about it, I decided I would just let them stand on their own with no further editorial comment from me. I think their relevance is obvious.
- I do want to look at how these verses apply in a larger context.
- It's unbelievable how often we read about someone seeking to take out a “hit” on someone else over love (lust) or money. It's more incredible how many “average” people will agree to kill for a mere few thousand dollars.
- Here's the point: We may shake our heads and say none of our family would get involved in anything like that! That's what the family members of those people we read about in the news once said. No one sets out to raise a murderer or thief or to become one themselves.
- The danger begins when we underestimate how depraved our human nature can be when someone becomes obsessed with the idea that they want what they want and nothing is going to get in their way.
- Why would a young person even consider criminal behavior? Criminals are the best “recruiters” of all. They make the plans seem exciting!
- Just look at history. In the 1930's, many misguided people found the legend of Bonnie and Clyde romantic and exciting. They were psychotic murders NOT folk heroes. Do you remember how they died?

17 If a bird sees a trap being set, it knows to stay away. 18 But these people set an ambush for themselves; they are trying to get themselves killed. 19 Such is the fate of all who are greedy for money; it robs them of life.

- The criminal element always thinks they'll never get caught.
- We often watch documentaries about true crime stories. Over and over again I turn to Susan and say, "How could they think they could get away with this and not get caught?"
- Here's an actual news story from this week that applies to these verses.
- Dateline Philadelphia: *"A man died while trying to blow up an ATM in North Philadelphia early Tuesday as thieves blew up or stole cash machines across the city overnight in what authorities believe was an "organized" and "coordinated" effort, police said.*
- *The 24-year-old, whose name has not been released, suffered trauma to his upper body after placing an explosive in a sidewalk-facing ATM outside a sports bar along North 2nd Street near Susquehanna Avenue around 6:15 a.m., Philadelphia police said.*ⁱ
- I am not minimizing the fact that this misguided young man died. It's likely he didn't know Christ and we should all be grieved if that's the case. Still, I couldn't avoid sharing that story from just this week in the context of verse 19: "Such is the fate of all who are greedy for money; it robs them of life."
- We don't have to be an armed robber to fall for the lure of "ill-gotten gains." The Life Application Study Bible reminds us, *"Being greedy for gain is one of Satan's surest traps. It begins when he plants the suggestion that we can't live without some possession or more money. Then that desire fans its own fire until it becomes an all-consuming obsession. Ask God for wisdom to recognize any greedy desire before it destroys you. God through his Spirit will give you wisdom and help you overcome it."*ⁱⁱ

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Followers of Christ shouldn't just accept worldly knowledge when we have access to Godly wisdom. It's the wisdom from God (from His word and from His Holy Spirit) and the wisdom that pleases God (when we obey it.)
- It's our responsibility to share that wisdom with others, especially our own kids and other young people.
- It's not only children and young people that are susceptible to bad influences. Years of life don't automatically equal wisdom and adults can head down the road of bad influences if we aren't on guard.
- One of the greatest weak spots on the path to being unwise is becoming so obsessed with our lusts and possessions that we'll do almost anything to obtain the object of our desire.
- We can't underestimate how depraved our human nature can be.
- Thankfully, followers of Christ have His Holy Spirit to convict us. Our ultimate protection is to stay in God's word and in His presence through prayer as the source of His wisdom.

ⁱ <https://www.dictionary.com/e/wisdom-vs-knowledge/>

ⁱⁱ *ibid*

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.gotquestions.org/godly-wisdom.html>

^{iv} Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Skillful* (p. 21). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^v Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Skillful* (p. 22). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{vi} <https://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/local/atm-explosion-philadelphia/2416372/>

^{vii} Tyndale. Life Application Study Bible NKJV (LASB: Full Size) (Kindle Locations 149495-149497). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.