

Wisdom has always been hard to come by. Being wise often requires an openness to learn, a humility about having the answers, and a whole lot of experience. Since the day we were blessed with the first smartphone, we have had access to the knowledge of the world in our pockets. Knowing what knowledge is relevant, useful, and oriented toward our blessing is the work of discernment, and putting it to use toward the correct goal that is in line with the will of God is the job of wisdom. All the knowledge and intelligence in the world will do you no good, in fact, will be a curse to you, without wisdom. Wisdom means having a mind, heart, and will oriented toward God, knowing the true value of the world around us, and pursuing things that will ultimately glorify God, bless others and us as well. Join us this week as we pursue wisdom.

Day 1

Pray for it

So how do we get wisdom? Pray. The bible teaches us that we should ask God for wisdom. So, do you? How often? Have you seen an increase in wisdom? Most people that I talk to do not make a habit of praying for wisdom, perhaps because they are mistaken about what wisdom is. Wisdom is not intelligence, nor is it education. Wisdom is the ability to know the mind of God, to know his values and to make them a part of your life. Wisdom is covenantal because it requires us to have the mind and heart of God, to see the world as he does, to love it as he does, and to know in any and every situation what has value. A man of great intelligence can be a formidable enemy, and in any good detective movie a capable villain is a must for an engaging story. When Sherlock Holmes faces professor Moriarty at Reichenbach falls, we sense that he is overmatched, and are not surprised at the outcome of his struggle. These stories work because we know that intelligence and knowledge are compatible with evil, and when paired with a desire to do harm make someone truly terrifying. Wisdom is different. Wisdom is, by its nature, incompatible with evil, so that when you meet an evil person he can be automatically excluded from the population of the wise. Why is this so? Because a wise man knows the foolishness of evil, and has no desire to participate in it or to experience the end that it will undoubtedly lead him to. The wise man is in union with the heart and mind of God, and so it makes sense to ask Him to provide us with it, because there is no other source.

Verses: James 1:5, Proverbs 3:13-18, Proverbs 19:20

Prayer Topics: Insight, Understanding, Contemplate, Discernment

Day 2

Walk with the Wise

Intelligence and knowledge can take you from point "A" to point "B" quickly and efficiently. Intelligence and knowledge, on their own, cannot tell you what your aim should be. When I was in Jr. High, I had a friend who was friends with the smart kids, and so spent some time with them infrequently. One of the kids in the group was one of the smartest kids I had ever run into, able to breeze through the most difficult classes with ease, getting bored with the lack of challenge. I remember sitting at the lunch table one day when he told me that he was in favor of complete anarchy and hoped he would see the day when all rules, government, and society collapsed into a Mad Max style apocalyptic free-for-all. I was very surprised to hear this, but he told me that the reason for this desire was that civil society and rules stopped evolution, and he wanted humans to continue to evolve, and that meant survival of the fittest where most would die unpleasant deaths. After this conversation I never spent any time around him again. The bible tells us that he who walks with the wise grows wise, but that the companion of fools comes to ruin. If we want to increase in wisdom, we must spend time with wise people. Wisdom sets us

on a journey to what is good, and while intelligent people might be traveling faster, wise people are traveling to the right destination. All parents that care about their kids want them to hang around with people who are wise, the necessity of this desire for having a good life never changes. Find some people who are wise and walk with them.

Verses: Proverbs 10:23, Proverbs 12:15, Colossians 3:16

Prayer Topics: Association, Fellowship, Alliance

Day 3

Be Quick to Listen and Slow to Speak

Having wisdom does not mean having all the answers. A wise person will not only know when he doesn't have the answer, but will be happy to be silent, even if that makes others think him a fool. A wise person has no need to impress others with his intelligence, and is happy when someone else not only has the answer, but when they receive praise for it. In fact, the wise man is the first to praise the one who has the answer. The wise man is able to understand that someone he is not fond of may have great insight into a situation, and is able to perceive the unique contribution that others are able to make. The wise man is able to understand that much is revealed about a person when they speak, and that all of that information will have relevance at some point. The wise man does not engage in useless arguments, and is willing to let someone else "win" when some higher goal can be had by losing. The wise man desires the growth and blessing of the group and is not concerned by his place in the group. In short, the wise man knows what has value, and spends his time pursuing only that. He is unconcerned with anything else, and he knows that listening often gets him closer to what has value than talking.

Verses: Proverbs 1:5, James 1:19, Proverbs 22:17

Prayer Topics: Community, Observe, Patience, Gradual

Day 4

Be in Control of Your Anger

The fool acts out of his emotions, and allows his whim to choose his emotions at any moment. The fool most often lets others pick his emotions for him, because deciding on emotions can be difficult work. When acting out of his emotions, the fool most often looks for immediate reward, and almost nothing is more rewarding than the indulgence of our anger, especially when we feel it is righteous. The problem is that anger is like a wrecking ball, great at breaking and clearing, but terrible at building and uniting. There are times when something needs to be torn down, and anger is great at that, but unfortunately the use of our anger feels so good to us that it becomes addictive, and we eventually find our lives to be a wasteland as we have destroyed all the good things we could have had if we had been wise. The realization of this fact usually leads to more anger, which then starts the cycle all over again. Even anger that is not acted out is a terrible problem. A friend of mine has a hard time being patient while driving. Yes, a friend. Even when his anger toward other drivers is not acted upon, he finds something troubling has occurred, namely a disconnection with other people. You cannot feel covenantally connected with others while also feeling angry toward them, and so you will find that anger, even when not acted upon, will destroy the unity that you feel with others, and will thereby impoverish your life. If you want to be wise, you must act from a place of wisdom, not a place of anger. Stop letting anger call the shots in your life.

Verses: Proverbs 14:29, Psalm 37:8, James 1:20

Prayer Topics: Discipline, Calm, Cool, Collected

Day 5

Fear God

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. This doesn't mean the terror of God, but the respect of God. The reality is that without the proper valuing of God, you cannot and will not make His values yours. When you truly value God, you will not want to displease Him in any way. You will fear distance from Him, and you will want to resemble Him in any way that you can. You will put time, effort, and energy into being reconciled to Him, having your mind, your heart, and your actions be just like His. When you fear God, evil will be no enticement to you but will sicken and repulse you. So how do you gain the fear of God? You focus on all of His attributes, all of His glory, all of His goodness, and all of His worth. Meditating on the grandeur of God, seeing how truly awesome and splendid He is will transform your heart and your mind, and will be the starting point of your wisdom.

Verses: Proverbs 19:23, Psalm 25:14, 1 Peter 2:17

Prayer Topics: Awe, Appreciation, Closeness, Resemblance