

# WOMAN *of* WISDOM

*Lessons for Living from the  
Book of Proverbs*

**Myrna Alexander**

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## LESSON ONE



# Introduction to Biblical Wisdom

*“Where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell?”*  
—JOB 28:12

When our world tries to answer this question various suggestions are made. Some say that wisdom is found in education, or certain people, or human experience. Others think it is discovered in old age or bought with silver and gold. The problem is not with these things in themselves; but wisdom cannot be defined by them.

The Scriptures state that wisdom begins with God and His perspective.

“God understands the way to it and He alone knows where it dwells” (Job 28:23).

So when a person earnestly confides, as my daughter did, “I want to be wise,” to what do I direct her?

The book of Proverbs throws out the challenge: Do you want to be wise? Then here’s the path.

“Wisdom calls: ‘You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, gain understanding. Listen, for I have worthy things to say; I open my lips to speak what is right. My mouth speaks what is true. . . . Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice

gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her” (Proverbs 8:5, 6, 7, and 11).

## Study Lesson One

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### DAILY DISCOVERY I *In Search of Wisdom*

Stop and ask God to give you understanding as you study.

1.
  - a. The route to becoming wise is often misunderstood. Genesis 3:1–6 records an interesting discussion between the serpent-Satan and Eve. In light of Genesis 3:1–6 (especially verse 6), what did Eve desire?
  - b. How did Eve attempt to get what she desired? In what way was this attempt inconsistent with the first principle of wisdom found in Proverbs 1:7? (Psalm 111:10 may help you.)
  - c. State the end result of Eve’s approach to “getting” wisdom.
  - d. Can you think of a way you have been led astray on your search for wisdom?
2. Many years later, the suffering Job also desired to know wisdom. During interaction with friends, Job shared his conclusions concerning man’s wisdom (Job 28:1–13). Through suffering, Job realized man is skillful in discovering treasures of earth, yet he does not easily know wisdom. Briefly summarize Job’s perceptive conclusions in Job 28:13–28.

3. Two distinct types of wisdom are discussed in James 3:13–18. Describe each, indicating their end result. (Use a dictionary to broaden your understanding of the descriptive words used in the passage. Share your research with the group.)
4. How could you use James 3:13–18 to help determine if a person is wise and understanding? In contrast, what guidelines are commonly used?

## DAILY DISCOVERY II: *God, the Source of All Wisdom*

5.
  - a. Summarize what the Scriptures declare concerning God in Daniel 2:20–22; Romans 16:27; and Colossians 2:2–3.
  - b. On the basis of these verses, from whom should you first seek counsel in any situation? Do you?
  - c. In what area do you need to apply this principle?

The discovery of wisdom must begin with God. If Eve had remembered the character of her God, she would not have been fooled into thinking that wisdom could be found apart from Him and His commands!

## DAILY DISCOVERY III *Facets of Wisdom*

“Wisdom is the principle thing,” states Proverbs 4:1. It is helpful to understand wisdom’s many facets as presented in Proverbs. The following words are used interchangeably with “wisdom” in Proverbs 1:1–5, helping the reader develop an understanding of the shades of meaning in this word, leading to a more complete picture of wisdom.

6. **Instruction or Training.** (Proverbs 1:2a, 3a) The use of this word is an indication that wisdom is not “picked-up” casually, like a pebble on the beach. The concept of time and discipline are suggested by the word *instruction*. This word usually has a note of sternness, ranging from warning to chastening.

Proverbs 24:30–32 is a good example of this concept concerning wisdom.

- a. How was the author of Proverbs 24:30–32 warned by what he saw?
  - b. What wise response did the author have when he saw something that disturbed him?
  - c. How are you warned by this picture?
7. **Understanding or Insight.** Here the concept is one of discernment, since both nouns come from the verb “to discern.”
- a. When Solomon became king he asked the Lord for wisdom to lead the people. For what does 1 Kings 3:9 specify that Solomon asked?
  - b. In the New Testament, how is this same concept seen in Paul’s prayer for believers in Philippians 1:9–10?
  - c. According to Hebrews 5:14, to become mature in Christ what area of your life needs training? What does the word *practice* in this verse suggest to you?
8. **Wise dealing or wise behavior;** common sense, practical wisdom.
- a. In what way is the son of Proverbs 10:5 demonstrating this facet of wisdom?
  - b. How might you apply this proverb to your life?
9. **Discretion and Shrewdness** (not used in the negative sense here). The positive side of these words is used in



Proverbs to show that a godly individual is one who takes the trouble to know her way about and plan her course realistically— “she knows the ropes.”

How is this practical facet of wisdom seen in Proverbs 22:3? Try to make your answer personal.

10. **Knowledge** and **Learning**. Knowledge implies a knowing of truth, especially the truth concerning God. Learning emphasizes that truth is something given and then grasped.

In light of how **knowledge** is used in Proverbs (see above definition), what is Proverbs 2:6 declaring to those who say, “finite people can never be sure of anything concerning God”? What does this mean to you?

## DAILY DISCOVERY IV

### *Expressions of Wisdom (Part 1)*

Proverbs may be expressed in a number of ways. Various types of proverbs may admonish, instruct, or observe lessons from life. The following will help you understand the variety of ways truth is expressed in the Proverbs.

11. A **comparative proverb** describes or defines one thing by comparing it to another. Most proverbs use comparison to teach their truths. The Hebrew word for *proverb* means “to be like” or “to represent” and is used for all expressions that compare one thing to another.
  - a. What is being compared in Proverbs 25:28?
  - b. Why might the picture presented in this proverb help you to grasp the proverb’s meaning?
  - c. To what areas of your life might this proverb refer?

12. A **precept** is a rule concerning moral conduct and is often expressed as a command.
- What is the wise or godly behavior commanded in Proverbs 25:21?
  - How might you apply this precept to your life? Be specific—insert a name.
13. A **maxim** is a rule emphasizing the practical aspects of life, often expressed as a command.
- What practical truth is expressed in Proverbs 25:16–17?
  - Rewrite this maxim in your own words, relating it to a specific situation in your life.
14. A **truism** is a more or less universal truth that is applicable to many situations.

Restate the truism of Proverbs 10:4, making its meaning personal in your life.

15. An **adage** is a simple, practical truth expressed in a figure of speech.
- Discover the truth expressed in the metaphor of Proverbs 25:4–5.
  - What wise counsel is God giving you through this proverb?
16. A **by-word** is a scornful or sarcastic exclamation about some object or person.
- What is being emphasized in Proverbs 21:24? How?
  - Can you think of any situation in which this pictures you?

## DAILY DISCOVERY V

### *Expressions of Wisdom (Part 2)*

17. An **admonition** does not leave it up to the reader to draw a conclusion, in contrast to a proverbial saying.
  - a. Explain the admonition in Proverbs 27:2. Can you think of an area of your life to which this admonition is particularly applicable?
  - b. Often the author adds a motive to his admonition as a basis for heeding the admonition. What is the clear admonition in Proverbs 16:3? What motive is given to encourage this good work in you?
  - c. Consider an area of your life in which you are presently struggling (victory over a negative habit, reaching out to a problem person, a desire to properly encourage your husband), then follow the biblical admonition of Proverbs 16:3. Write out the verse, including your situation within it.
  
18. The **instructive saying** expresses a cause-effect relationship. The author presumes that his hearer will desire the “beneficial” effect rather than the “destructive.”
  - a. In Proverbs 11:24 what is the cause and effect in each part of the comparison?
  - b. Which is the beneficial effect?
  
19. In the **sentence** or **saying** the author describes things “as they are,” but the value of that which he is trying to impress upon the mind is not clear from the saying itself. In such cases the author’s intention must be discovered from the overall emphasis of the book.
  - a. Read Proverbs 10:15, which is an example of a saying in which the author’s intention might not be clear.

