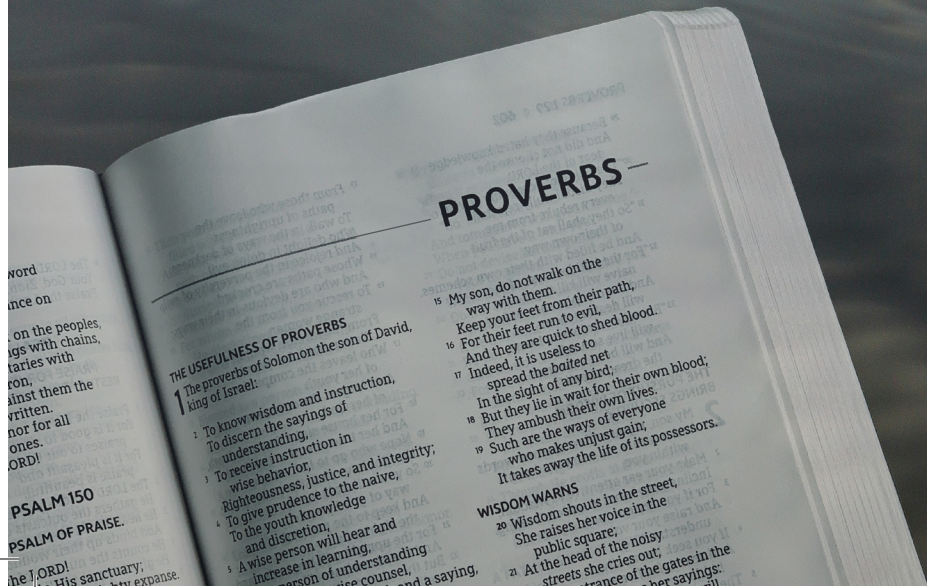


LIGHT

Wisdom From Proverbs



THE USEFULNESS OF PROVERBS

The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel:

- 1 To know wisdom and instruction, To discern the sayings of understanding,
- 2 To receive instruction in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice, and integrity,
- 3 To give prudence to the naive, To the youth knowledge and discretion,
- 4 A wise person will hear and increase in understanding, A person of understanding will receive counsel, and a saying,

PROVERBS

- 15 My son, do not walk on the way with them. Keep your feet run to evil.
- 16 For their feet are quick to shed blood. And they are quick to spread the baited net.
- 17 In the sight of any bird; But they lie in wait for their own blood. They ambush their own lives.
- 18 Such are the ways of everyone who makes unjust gain. It takes away the life of its possessors.
- 20 Wisdom shouts in the street, She raises her voice in the public square;
- 21 At the head of the noisy streets she cries out; At the gates in the silence of the night she says:

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LIGHT

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CHRISTIAN RECORD
— SERVICES FOR THE BLIND —

Editorial:

Growing Up

by Jeri Lyn Rogge



C*lomp! Clomp! Clomp!* I'm making supper in our basement apartment on a cold winter evening, pausing to figure out if the sound originated above my head or around the corner. Hearing nothing more, I resume mealtime prep.

Moments later, it returns: *Clomp! Clomp! Clomp!* This time, the ruckus was accompanied by my toddler son's sweet giggles.

"Mommy, look!" He found a pair of my high heels, and his tiny feet fit inside the front third of each shoe. As he waddled down the hall, clad in a sweatshirt and shorts, the heels of my shoes banged against the floor. Yes, I have a photo. No, I don't have permission to share it!

My son is a young adult and no longer does adorable things like this. I smile wistfully when that photo pops up in an app that shares image and video memories. As you might expect, he's not thrilled and reminds me that image is never to appear on social media.

Maybe you have similar memories of "trying on" adulthood, pretending to be a teacher or astronaut, or imagining how fun it would be not to take naps or go to school. When we initially encounter wisdom, it's like a comically oversized sweater, sleeves dragging on the ground or high heels making horse-hoof clomps. We literally don't understand what we've gotten ourselves into.

As baby Christians, much like tiny humans, we may give little thought to the consequences of our actions because we haven't matured yet. Wisdom is ridiculous to those who don't understand or realize its importance.

However, as we grow and develop, wearing grown-up garments and shoes makes sense. The sweater or shoes didn't change; we did. We have experienced more seasons of life. As a result, we should recognize and pursue the benefits of wisdom.

We should recognize and pursue the benefits of wisdom.

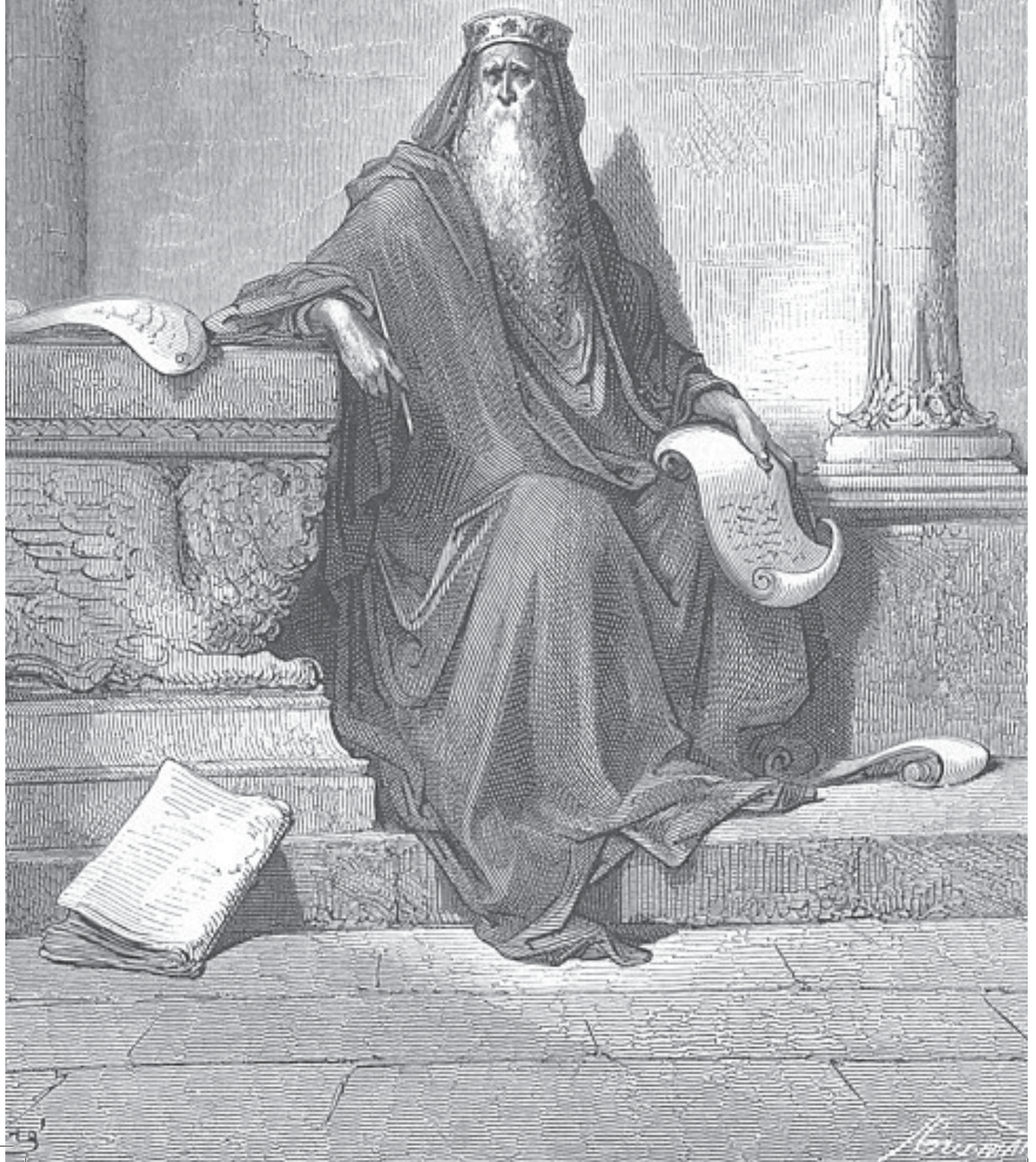
The apostle Paul declares, "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. But when I became an adult, I set aside childish ways" (1 Corinthians 13:11, NET Bible). Childish and childlike things have their time and place, to the delight of parents and grandparents. Nevertheless, when the baby Christian grows up, it's time to pursue, embrace, and put on wisdom. "The wise in heart are called discerning, and gracious words promote instruction" (Proverbs 16:21, NIV).

No one has cornered the market on wisdom. Even so, God's Word, particularly the wisdom literature of Proverbs, delivers beneficial insights for today's readers. As you enjoy this edition, filled with perspectives from this ancient book, I hope you'll find the just-right wisdom "garment" for the coming days.

Jeri Lyn Rogge is the director of editorial and outreach ministries at Christian Record Services in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Want Wisdom?

by Imelda Weaver



If you could learn from the wisest person in the world, would you jump at the chance? I would! As 1 Kings 3:12 tells us, God gave King Solomon, a son of David, a wise and discerning mind superior to anyone before or after him. When the queen of Sheba learned about Solomon, she challenged him with riddles (1 Kings 10:1, NIV). She told Solomon, "The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true. But I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half was told me; in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard" (1 Kings 10:6-7). Solomon composed 3,000 wise sayings, some of which were included in the book of Proverbs (1 Kings 4:32).

Most of the book of Proverbs is credited to Solomon, who also collected older proverbs, as mentioned in 22:17 and 24:23. We are uncertain of the names of these wise authors or whether it was one person or many. However, we do know who wrote the last two chapters of Proverbs. Chapter 30 was written by Agur, the son of Jakeh. He is a humble man who is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. The last chapter has wise words by King Lemuel. God inspired Solomon and the other authors to write Proverbs to teach us what is true and right (2 Timothy 3:16). Solomon stated that the book of Proverbs is to teach people wisdom

and how to live disciplined, successful, right, just, and fair lives. This book is for everyone who wants to grow in wisdom (Proverbs 1:2-5).

Solomon taught in Proverbs 9:10 that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, and by searching for it, we will understand how to fear the Lord. Why should we fear God? Fearing God means we are awed by who He is and respect God's authority enough to take what He says seriously. Our God is the Creator of the universe and Ruler over everything. I think it is challenging to fear God because we put a lot of emphasis on His love and not enough on His justice. We need to fear Him enough to obey Him and not sin. At the end of another book by King Solomon, he concluded that all people must fear God and obey His commandments because God will bring everything we do into judgment (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

Wisdom is personified as a woman in Proverbs 1:20-33, 8:1-36, and 9:12; she calls out to everyone everywhere. Those who find her receive life and God's favor. Those who don't find wisdom bring harm to themselves. All who hate her love death.

Proverbs 8:27-36 sounds like a description of Jesus, but John 1:1-5, 14 and others make clear that Jesus was not a created being; in contrast, Proverbs 8:22 says that wisdom was created. We also recognize that Jesus is

greater than Solomon (Matthew 12:42). All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Jesus (Colossians 2:3). He is the wisdom of God and from God (1 Corinthians 1:24, 30).

The apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:15 to live like wise people. Therefore, reading the book of Proverbs is a great way to learn wisdom. Solomon says, "Getting wisdom is the wisest thing you can do! For wisdom is far more valuable than rubies. Nothing you desire can compare with it" (4:7; 8:11, NLT). In Ecclesiastes 7:12, Solomon says, "Wisdom and money can get you almost anything, but only wisdom can save your life."

The book of Proverbs is great for parents because Solomon delivers fatherly wisdom to his son and tells him to listen to his mother, too. In the last chapter, Lemuel shares instructions from his mother.

Proverbs is also like a manual book from a life coach. If anyone wants to learn from the wisest life coach in the world, then reading the book of Proverbs and following what it says is the answer. There are wise sayings about friendship, marriage, desires, emotions, and many other things that come up in life.

The book of Proverbs is excellent for people in business, too. There are many strategies and principles for running a business in ways that would please God. Here are just a few.

Verse 11:1 says God hates dishonest scales but delights in accurate weights. We may no longer use balancing scales, but we need honest businesses. Wealth from hard work grows over time, but verse 13:11 warns that wealth from get-rich-quick schemes quickly vanishes. The lack of advice causes plans to go wrong, but many advisers bring success, according to 15:22. Verse 27:23 advises us to know how our flocks are doing and put our hearts into caring for our herds. Businesses need to treat their employees well, not just their customers.

Several modern-day influential people gained wisdom from the book of Proverbs. Evangelist Billy Graham read Psalms and Proverbs daily, stating that it was “the Psalms to learn how to get along with God and Proverbs to learn how to get along with people.” Reading Proverbs each day was huge for athlete Tim Tebow as he was growing up. Cindy Monroe, the founder of Thirty-One Gifts, came up with the name for her company from the wife of noble character described in Proverbs 31:10-31. Author John Maxwell has a “Minute With Maxwell” video in which he challenges leaders looking for wisdom to read the book of Proverbs one chapter a day for 31 days. Would you accept his challenge?

There are 31 chapters in the book of Proverbs, aligning one chapter each day of a month with 31 days. So, read chapter one on the first day, chapter two on the second

day, and so on until you reach the end of the month. Let the Holy Spirit guide you to verses relevant to your circumstance that day, and ask God to help you use them in your life.

Now that you are more familiar with Solomon and the book of Proverbs, I hope you will join me in wanting wisdom and reading a chapter daily. I leave you with this encouragement from Jesus’ brother, James: “If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and He will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking” (James 1:5). God really wants His children to be wise!

Imelda Weaver enjoys reading, writing, and researching interesting Bible facts. She writes from her home in Franklin, Tennessee.

Daily Proverbs Reading Plan

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ☐ Proverbs 1 | ☐ Proverbs 12 | ☐ Proverbs 23 |
| ☐ Proverbs 2 | ☐ Proverbs 13 | ☐ Proverbs 24 |
| ☐ Proverbs 3 | ☐ Proverbs 14 | ☐ Proverbs 25 |
| ☐ Proverbs 4 | ☐ Proverbs 15 | ☐ Proverbs 26 |
| ☐ Proverbs 5 | ☐ Proverbs 16 | ☐ Proverbs 27 |
| ☐ Proverbs 6 | ☐ Proverbs 17 | ☐ Proverbs 28 |
| ☐ Proverbs 7 | ☐ Proverbs 18 | ☐ Proverbs 29 |
| ☐ Proverbs 8 | ☐ Proverbs 19 | ☐ Proverbs 30 |
| ☐ Proverbs 9 | ☐ Proverbs 20 | ☐ Proverbs 31 |
| ☐ Proverbs 10 | ☐ Proverbs 21 | |
| ☐ Proverbs 11 | ☐ Proverbs 22 | |

Proceed With Caution

by Beckie Horter



Many years ago, while shopping, I saw an old friend from school. I had my newborn with me, and we started talking about motherhood. She seemed excited about the subject, and I noticed she had gained weight in her midsection. I proceeded to ask her when she was due.

“When am I due?” she echoed incredulously. “I had a baby two years ago!” It was the classic case of “open mouth, insert foot,” otherwise known as putting your foot in your mouth. Oh, that sinking feeling when you’ve said something you instantly regret. You’d like to rewind the conversation and start over. Or somehow pretend it wasn’t what you said — at least it wasn’t what you meant.

Maybe you made a wrong assumption, as I did, or blurted an unfiltered thought that should have remained inside your head. Have you asked a question that was too personal or let a secret slip, forgetting it was a secret? Once those words are out, there is no pulling them back in. Words linger in the hearts and minds of the hearers and can last a lifetime. That is a good reason to exercise caution.

“The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing” (Proverbs 12:18, NIV). In the case of my friend, I was guilty of recklessness. I hurt her feelings. Even though it was unintentional, I learned a valuable lesson that day. Never

again would I look at a person's body and make assumptions or comments.

What a challenge we face trying to tame the tongue! James 3:4 says the tongue is like the rudder of a ship, a small thing directing something massive and strong. Sometimes, I think it would be helpful to have a roadmap for wise conversations and handy signs to give us direction on the relational highway. The book of Proverbs also has much to say on the subject of wise speech. Obviously, it is a matter close to God's heart.

The conversational journey begins when we start talking with someone. From there, we may change lanes or subjects, make detours, check back in to get more information, pause to decide the direction to take, or throw up a roadblock, admitting no entry. Just like that, the exchange is over.

I find words tricky. They are vital to our relationships, yet they are so basic that we often don't think about them. We just speak. Consequently, it's easy to become careless, especially if the situation is stressful or emotionally charged.

We who are visually impaired face an additional challenge. We rely on words as a critical engagement lifeline with the outside world and mentally compensate for our eyes to sort things out. It can be draining, and

we can become short-tempered more quickly than others. I have often noticed a level of frustration building beneath the surface of my psyche. This can come out in my speech, especially if I am tired, stressed, or down. Here is where I need the help of the Holy Spirit. First, exercise self-control (heed the stop sign); secondly, remind me of Scripture. A few deep breaths don't hurt, either.

"In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise" (Proverbs 10:19, NKJV). King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, says less is best regarding words. Too many can lead to hard feelings and other sins, like gossip, if we are not careful. A caution sign might be flashing in my brain as I ponder how to proceed with a difficult conversation. We need to talk, but I don't want to say too much or the wrong thing. I don't want to wreck our discussion.

Full disclosure here: I have struggled with choosing wise words in the past. This is an area of weakness for me, but I am determined to improve, and I think I am. The needle is moving toward growth, albeit slowly. Wisdom is the road I want to take. As a Christian, I cannot ignore all the Bible has to say on the subject.

"The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things" (Proverbs 15:28, NASB).

Pondering may seem like an outdated notion in our fast-paced world; however, it is not. God's wisdom is timeless. I found that a well thought-out response is always preferable to a hasty answer. How many times have I wished I stopped to think instead of just reacting!

Bad reactions (in the form of words) inevitably lead to the need for apologies. Asking for forgiveness is biblical, a painful part of growth necessary in the Christian life. Being a perfectionist at heart and knowing it is an impossible standard means I continually fall short. I fail myself and others. I must seek forgiveness, first from God and then from others.

My dislike of apologies is a strong incentive to choose my words better. I've been mid-conversation, thinking, "Do I want to apologize for this later?" Of course, the answer is, "No!" I can then restrain my tongue instead of moving full steam ahead like a rudderless ship.

One of the blessings of not giving in to my flesh and rashly speaking is that the relationship can move forward without the awkward, painful baggage of regrettable speech. I discovered this recently when a friend disappointed me.

"Why don't we sign up for a book discussion?" she suggested one week after church. I was excited and quickly agreed. We enrolled and purchased the book.

The class began, and it seemed like we both enjoyed it. My friend gave me a ride home the first night, and we talked and laughed the whole way.

The next week rolled around, and she did not show up. Later, she texted and said she was tired from work, and I accepted her excuse.

The pattern of not showing up continued until the class ended. Halfway through, I was tempted to ask, "Why did you want me to join this group and then choose not to come?" However, I said nothing. I remembered confronting her about a different issue and regretted it. Additionally, I realized this pattern of absenteeism wasn't new. I had seen it twice before.

I decided to change my thinking instead of potentially starting an argument. It was not wise for me to expect reliability from this person. I had to forgive her without calling her out. It was not easy in the moment, but I believe God honored the decision. I went on to enjoy the class by myself and made new friends.

And so the journey goes. We battle our flesh, trying to yield to the Spirit, and oftentimes discover a blessing in the process. It's a trip worth taking and one that will lead us home.

Beckie Horter lives in Western Pennsylvania. She is a former newspaper correspondent and proofreader.

Wisdom and Folly

by Richard Clark Jr.

"Be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil" (Romans 16:19, NKJV).

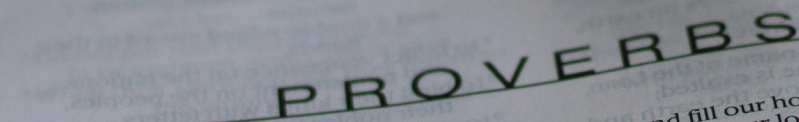
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| ☐ Careful | ☐ Learned |
| ☐ Clearheaded | ☐ Mockery |
| ☐ Complacency | ☐ Parables |
| ☐ Correction | ☐ Penetrating |
| ☐ Counsel | ☐ Perceptive |
| ☐ Crooked | ☐ Practical |
| ☐ Devious | ☐ Prudent |
| ☐ Diligence | ☐ Reproof |
| ☐ Discerning | ☐ Righteousness |
| ☐ Discretion | ☐ Scorning |
| ☐ Discipline | ☐ Sensible |
| ☐ Disdain | ☐ Shrewd |
| ☐ Experienced | ☐ Simpleton |
| ☐ Goodness | ☐ Thoughtful |
| ☐ Guidance | ☐ Understanding |
| ☐ Insightful | ☐ Wayward |
| ☐ Instruction | |

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אתם האדם
קרבו לנלות עלות
מך הוא לא תכלה
ת אשת אבין לא
עלות
מולדת בית או
עלות
עלות כי עלות
עלות בית
קר הוא לא תכלה
ת אבין לא
עלות

Wisely Knowing the Future

by Ray McAllister



Prologue: Purpose and Theme

Prologue: Purpose and Theme
The proverbs of Solomon son of David,
king of Israel:

The proverb
king of Israel:

² for attaining wisdom and understanding words of insight,
requiring a disciplined and prudent

for acquiring a disciplined life, is right and just and fair.

doing what is right and just and
prudence to the simple,

*for giving prudence to the young
knowledge and discretion to the
young

Let the wise listen and add to their learning.

and the other side of the road.

and fill our houses with plunder,
14 throw in your lot with us,
and we will share a common
purse" —

15 my son, do not go along with them,
do not set foot on their paths;
do not rush into sin,

16 for their feet rush into sin,
they are swift to shed blood.
—less to spread a net

17 How useless to spread a net
in full view of all the birds!
They lie in wait for their

These men lie in wait for their own blood.

100

know what happens in

know what happens in
long to get the secret

long to get the secret

our lives will change

all lives will change
will rise and fall. Here.

will rise and fall. Here,

Would you like to know what happens in advance? We all long to get the secret scoop on how our lives will change or how various nations will rise and fall. Here,

though, I'm focusing on a type of knowledge that helps in day-to-day decisions. What would you do if you knew of a book of the Bible that gave practical guidance concerning the future? In the following paragraphs, we will explore this book and how it helped me embark on a most unexpected journey.

SECRET INSIGHTS INTO KNOWING THE FUTURE

As we begin, let's uncover some seldom-discussed ideas concerning the meaning of knowing the future. In Genesis 41, Pharaoh has two dreams concerning the future. Genesis 41:8 says that one of the classes of people he calls to interpret the dream were the "wise men." In reality, Joseph, a Hebrew prisoner, reveals the meaning of the dreams, emphasizing that only God gives interpretations (Genesis 41:16).

This idea of wise men explaining the future is not limited to Genesis. Let's jump forward more than a thousand years to the book of Daniel. In Daniel 2, King Nebuchadnezzar has a troubling dream. To learn its meaning, he calls the "wise men" among various groups of people (Daniel 2:2). In Daniel 4:6, Nebuchadnezzar calls wise men again to interpret a dream. Then, in Daniel 5:7, King Belshazzar calls wise men, who seem to be associated with astrologers

and other mystics, to decode and interpret a message supernaturally written on the wall. It is said in verse 11 that Daniel might be able to give this interpretation since he showed divine wisdom. Daniel is the only person in all three stories who provides the interpretations and gives glory to God (Daniel 2:19-20).

Something should be becoming clear here: There seems to be a connection between knowing the future and wisdom. Something fascinating I learned in my doctoral studies of the Old Testament is that in Hebrew thinking, wisdom means knowing the future, nothing more, nothing less. Because of this, the book of Daniel is not placed among the prophets in the Hebrew Bible. It, along with Proverbs, is considered wisdom literature.

This idea is not limited to Hebrew writings in the Bible. Revelation 13:18 says that wisdom is required to calculate the beast's number. What is important here is not the identity of the beast or this number but that wisdom is needed to know the future. This may seem challenging, as we usually associate wisdom with making good decisions. To make good decisions, though, we must be able to think from cause to effect.

What is this Bible book that says so much about knowing the future? We need only turn to Proverbs. In Proverbs 1:2, Solomon states

that the book aims to help one gain wisdom and understanding. Proverbs 8 and 9 contain glorious, mystical descriptions of wisdom, personified as a woman (Proverbs 8:22-23). We know that Proverbs mainly concerns wisdom in daily life situations.

HOW WE CAN KNOW THE FUTURE

Let's flesh out what it means to know the future from Proverbs. To do this, we'll look at some of the more interesting sayings and how they work. Proverbs 15:1 says, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (NASB 1995). It can be observed that offering a gentle response may result in mitigating anger. A harsh answer, though, leads to the consequence of stirring up anger. In other words, based on this proverb, we can predict an outcome resulting from our actions. We can then predict the future, making decisions about behavior according to how we know the consequences will turn out.

We can all name instances where a gentle answer has not turned away anger. If someone, for example, is trying to make us angry, gently replying might frustrate that person. Assuming, though, that we're interacting with people who want to enjoy a relationship with us, gentle replies are more soothing and healing.

Nonetheless, future-predicting statements

in the book of Proverbs cannot be taken absolutely as long-term prophecies spanning empires, such as those stated as sealed or inscribed, as in the book of Daniel. Proverbs is a book that lists the outcomes of behaviors. These outcomes are subject to the free will of those responding to us, which means that anything can still happen. What Proverbs gives is the insight to make the decisions that should, by probability, produce the result we expect.

Here is a rather amusing set of verses: "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes" (Proverbs 26:4-5, ESV). A gentle answer can't be expected to make much difference in this situation.

There appear to be two opposing rules. We're initially told not to answer a fool according to their foolishness. Then, in the next verse, we're told that we should answer a fool according to their foolishness. If we're looking for a collection of absolute commands, we definitely won't find that in these verses. We can't comply with both answering and not answering someone.

However, these two verses make perfect sense if we consider Proverbs a book of future-based insights and probable outcomes. Verse 4 says the bad things likely to happen when answering a fool according to their folly. Verse

5 says the good things that occur from such behavior. Both statements are perfectly valid, and the situation is not fully understood except when seen from both sides.

Some statements in Proverbs are more absolute in their focus, as they concern God, who does not change, and this is where my story comes in. Let's look at Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make straight your paths."

This promise greatly aided my struggle to earn a Ph.D. in biblical scholarship and determine how to use it for God. When I started my doctoral journey, I claimed by faith that I wouldn't have to take out any student loans for tuition. I felt impressed to add that if my tuition wouldn't be covered, I'd know that God wanted me somewhere else. Right away, the Michigan Commission for the Blind agreed to sponsor my journey, paying for all equipment, coursework, and dissertation formatting, for which I needed a sighted editor's help.

When I finished my degree, I struggled to find work. I soon learned that God was leading me to a critical, time-intensive task. I used my braille and ancient biblical language knowledge to set up 40,000 pages of linguistic materials in

accessible digital formats for the blind. These resources are now offered, free of charge, for the blind who wish to study the Bible in the original languages. Receiving the Jacob Bolotin Award from the National Federation of the Blind with my research team in 2016 confirms the Lord called me to that work. Although I have not yet secured full-time employment with my degree, I am pleased to have fulfilled God's objective.

God guides me every day as I trust Him. Even while writing this article, I prayed God would give me a clear path to writing what He wants.

The book of Proverbs gives the insight we need to have true wisdom, knowing the future in practical, real-life situations. It does not take an advanced scholar to determine what these wisdom statements mean.

I invite you to study Proverbs and even memorize some verses. They'll help us anticipate the outcomes to expect from our actions. In so doing, we must not forget to revere God first, as He is the One who invented wisdom and most fully knows the future. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7).

Ray McAllister is a frequent contributor to Light magazine from Berrien Center, Michigan.

Moderation Matters

by Tammy Darling



Moderation is a word that's not especially popular today. We want what we want. Period.

However, throughout Scripture, especially in Proverbs, we see the issue of moderation being addressed. Moderation matters. Why? At its core, a lack of moderation means putting other things before God, breaking the first commandment: "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3, NIV).

Yikes! So, while we may not want to practice moderation, it's essential we do. The quality of our relationship with the Lord, others, and even ourselves depends on it.

Noah Webster's 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* defines moderation as "Keeping a due mean between extremes or excess; restraint of violent passions or indulgence of appetite." Simply put, moderation involves avoiding excess and exercising self-control.

That's where the rubber hits the road. Practicing moderation is active; it requires that we do something. Honestly, sometimes we don't want to expend the effort. I don't want to expend the effort.

Philippians 4:5 says, "Let your moderation be known unto all men" (KJV). Here's the thing: Other people are watching. Are we accurately

representing Christ and following the path God laid before us in His Word? I know I'm not always, but I want to be. The following are some areas where we may need to practice moderation:

Are we accurately representing Christ and following the path God laid before us in His Word?

SPENDING

In years past, I spent a lot of money and jokingly called it "retail therapy." I would have done much better to spend that money on a Christian counselor to help me get to the bottom of my hunger to spend.

"The wise have wealth and luxury, but fools spend whatever they get" (Proverbs 21:20, NLT). That was me. Oh, that I could have those dollar bills back! I can't; what's gone is gone, but I can make better decisions now. I grieve what I could have done with that money for the kingdom of God. I know there's no condemnation, but I also realize now that I wasn't being a good steward of the money, that is, in truth, God's. All of that has changed.

"Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds" (Proverbs 27:23, NIV). To practice moderation and be good stewards, we must care for the

resources God has given us in a manner worthy of His name.

EATING

When I'm under pressure, stressed, and just plain weary, I want nothing more than to prop up my feet and chill. That chilling often includes ice cream, chips, or some other type of unhealthy comfort food. In excess. It pains me to write that, but it's true.

I realize that I'm turning to food instead of God. Not only do I make food an idol, but I also overindulge instead of practicing moderation. It should be simple enough to dole out a portion and leave the rest in the kitchen, but I struggle sometimes to make that choice.

"If you find honey, eat just enough — too much of it, and you will vomit" (Proverbs 25:16). Ever overdo the eating and pay for it later? I have. In fact, just last week, I didn't practice moderation and spent the night with stomach issues.

Proverbs 23:20-21 adds: "Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags." God isn't trying to prevent us from enjoying life. He knows less is more, something we don't always believe.

Though it's not always easy, I'm disciplining

myself not to eat in excess by being mindful of portion sizes. I don't want food to become an idol or my go-to when I'm stressed. I want to turn to God instead of food.

People are important, yes, but moderation matters, and we need one-on-one connections.

SOCIAL MEDIA

I love that things that didn't exist in ancient times can still find relevance in the Bible today. Proverbs 12:11 warns, "He who follows worthless pursuits lacks sense" (ESV). If that doesn't apply to social media, I don't know what does! Moderation and social media seem to be antithetical.

From every account I've ever come across, it seems the average American spends at least a couple of hours on social media daily. Excessive media consumption is not spiritually, mentally, physically, or emotionally beneficial. We keep scrolling, keep searching — but for what? Do we need to know what Jane is doing, cooking, or ranting about now? Does it matter that Mike and Mandy are back from their honeymoon cruise? Or that Amy and Jeff broke up?

People are important, yes, but moderation matters, and we need one-on-one connections.

Those face-to-face moments. Not the masks social media folks wear. And I'm just as guilty as the next person. I've displayed a happy post when, in fact, my life was a trainwreck waiting to be discovered.

Add to social media other phone usage and television time. Now the hours per day really stack up! Excessive media use can be depressing, deceptive, and wasteful. Life is fleeting; our minutes are precious. Let's use our time wisely. Pray Psalm 90:12 with me: "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (NIV).

THOUGHTS

The mind is powerful; what we think shapes our lives long before we ever speak or act. This is why we are often told that the battle begins in the mind, and because it does, we must regulate our thoughts.

In Proverbs 4:26-27, King Solomon offers this timeless advice: "Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil." We can't live on autopilot. If we don't reign in our thoughts and practice moderation in this area, our thoughts will run rampant.

Proverbs 28:26 reminds us of this: "Those who trust in themselves are fools, but those who

walk in wisdom are kept safe.” The remedy for our anxious, undisciplined thoughts is found in Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.” When we trust and submit our lives to the Lord, including our thoughts, we’ll remain on the right path.

While these are not all the areas of our lives that we need to practice moderation, they are good places to start. Overindulgence is not healthy on any level. Practicing moderation can help us distinguish between what’s truly important and what’s excessive. It helps us develop self-control, a fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5.

Moderation is a way of becoming more Christlike and avoiding being misled by the things of the flesh. Walking in the Spirit requires us to practice moderation. To be who we truly are in Christ, we must understand that moderation matters.

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At Work and At Rest:

Balancing Diligence With Disability

by Rhianna McGregor Hajzer



“**Y**our funds have been deposited.” The notification chimes on my phone, and I quickly scroll to my banking app to verify. Yes, my disability income has arrived. I’m awash with relief, and I give thanks that I can pay rent this month. Yet, amid my gratitude, another voice speaks, twisting a guilty knot in my stomach.

“You didn’t earn this. You’re entitled, a complete failure.” It’s a voice I’ve grown weary of battling, an echo of a culture that equates productivity with personal value — a narrative that I, as a Christian with a disability, constantly wrestle.

In a culture that prizes productivity above all else, people living with disabilities are often excluded — labeled as incompetent, entitled, or lazy for not meeting the output expected of an able-bodied person. The bid to secure employment is a dismal prospect for many, fraught with physical inaccessibility and attitudinal discrimination. However, this perspective fails to account for the benefits and diversity within the disability community. It is contrary to the truths of our innate worth as revealed by God in Scripture. The book of Proverbs offers timeless wisdom about diligence, rest, and avoiding laziness — principles that remain relevant, particularly for those navigating the complexities of living with disabilities.

Before addressing this appropriately, we must first define key terms. Unlike rest, which is modeled by God at creation and commanded in Scripture in the observance of the Sabbath as essential for a balanced life, laziness is characterized by an unwillingness to work or put in effort. On the other hand, diligence is a reflection of the heart, demonstrating an attitude of determination and purpose through careful and persistent work or effort. Scripture, particularly the book of Proverbs, teaches that no one should be lazy and to practice diligence as part of the call of the Christian life.

For people with disabilities, this can be a tough balance to strike. With conditions that can inhibit us from meeting culture's excessively high standards of practical contribution, how can we practice diligence with our God-given time, resources, and abilities while heeding the biblical command to avoid laziness?

The doctrine of *imago Dei*, meaning "image of God," forms the foundation of Christian identity, rooting us in the knowledge that every human being is made in God's likeness (Genesis 1:27). While culture espouses a gospel of works — who we are is equal to what we can produce — God showers us with grace. By His grace alone we are saved, not through works or cultural significance (Ephesians 2:8-9). And it is in Him alone that we have eternal, unconditional value.

This framework helps us to understand the passages presented in Proverbs as encouragement to pursue diligence rather than demeaning those who cannot work. Proverbs 14:23 (ESV) teaches, “In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty.” Fulfilling work that produces fruit differs for each person; diligence takes forms beyond manual labor that are equally important, such as advocacy, creative pursuits, and building relationships. Disability advocates have often been the instruments of significant and necessary changes in society, bringing about policies for greater access and awareness. Music, poetry, and other artistic expressions move hearts and inspire in ways that words alone cannot. And, as the foundation of godly, healthful lives, relationships require time, energy, and devotion to thrive. In pursuing non-traditional forms of work as life-giving alternatives, we can take comfort in this proverb: “Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established” (Proverbs 16:3).

Recent decades have witnessed the rapid growth of technology, many advancements of which have significantly expanded opportunities for contribution and participation in society, especially for people with disabilities. Assistive technologies and improvements in medical treatments have enhanced the ability of disabled individuals to live independently

and engage with their communities. Digital spaces have been transformed, allowing people to access an abundance of information, communicate with and maintain relationships around the globe, and stay up to date on current events. However, as with any innovation, Christians must remain vigilant to ensure technology serves its intended purpose: to assist, not dominate. While these advancements have opened unprecedented opportunities for connection, we must be mindful to heed the proverbist's warning: "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life" (Proverbs 4:23). Thus, we strive to prevent overindulgence and maintain a healthy outlook.

The ease and simplicity of modern technology can tempt us to use it as a replacement for manual labor. While it often provides the most efficient solution, there are times when we rely on it to avoid tasks we find inconvenient or challenging. Over time, this reliance can deepen into complacency, leaving us ill-prepared to handle tasks independently. This attachment to and dependence on technology can subtly drift into laziness if not balanced with discernment and discipline. Like any tool, technology must be utilized purposefully, ensuring it's used as a help rather than a hindrance.

Balancing diligence and the desire to contribute is a challenge disabled people face

in different ways. I need more sleep than is typical, which has sometimes devolved into using sleep to avoid uncomfortable emotions or situations. While rest is essential and commanded in Scripture, using sleep as an escape comes perilously close to laziness. It is a temptation on which I must keep a careful watch. Proverbs 20:13 (ESV) warns, "Love not sleep, lest you come to poverty; open your eyes, and you will have plenty of bread." Sleep itself is not a sin; even so, my misuse of this gift from God must be refocused on restoring my strength to continue serving Him rather than escaping the challenges He calls me to face with faithfulness and diligence.

Forging a path toward meaningful labor is a process that requires patience, perseverance, and prayer. The obstacles people with disabilities encounter can feel overwhelming and impossible to overcome. As a freelance writer, I've experienced the barriers and blessings the Lord brings as I hone my craft; as I research opportunities, build my skill, and seek the Lord's wisdom with each project, I am learning to trust in His timing and provision and embrace the challenges which refine me into the writer I pray He will use for His glory. In the small and seemingly insignificant tasks, diligence and faith are nurtured with prayerful practice and developed into a steady commitment that enables me to pursue the

most daunting challenges.

As demanding as it is to practice diligence while navigating the physical, mental, and emotional struggles that often accompany disability, it is vital to submit our needs, desires, and abilities to God by seeking His guidance on how we can use the resources and talents He has entrusted to us. When we surrender our efforts to Him, we can find purpose in our work, trusting that He will direct us in using our abilities to serve Him faithfully and meaningfully.

Rhianna McGregor Hajzer is a Christian by grace, blind by design, and a writer by passion. She writes from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.

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Pursuing Everlasting Wisdom

by Allison Wilson Lee



THE LESSON OF THE RACE

So early! I thought on the foggy weekend morning of my first 10K race. I had participated in shorter races; this would be my longest one. *Would I be able to run the entire span of just over six miles? Would I feel successful about how fast I completed the distance?*

While I stretched, I struck up a conversation with a young boy. “Seth” was talkative and nervous; he’d never run a race and appreciated any tips I could offer. Although distracted by my thoughts, I chatted with Seth in the damp morning air.

I started at a good pace but quickly lost steam. After only one mile, I began a slow jog and started walking more than running. When I finally finished — close to the end of the pack — I just wanted to leave. On the way home, a thought struck me: *I should have stayed and cheered Seth across the finish line.* I knew he’d been behind me throughout the race. I could have waited a few minutes and encouraged him, but the opportunity had passed.

As Christ followers, we no longer live for ourselves but are to make His priorities our own. Sometimes, building others up as God instructs requires us to stick around when we’d rather go home and feel sorry for ourselves — that’s what cheering Seth would have asked

of me that day. Jesus did not live to please Himself, and we are to consider others' needs, as Paul writes in Romans 15:1-3.

The book of Proverbs instructs about the blessings and warnings in how we use our words. "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life" (Proverbs 15:4, NKJV). "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit" (Proverbs 18:21, ESV). Speaking words of life could have spurred Seth on in this challenge.

I personally know how words of blessing cause a person to blossom. At age 17, I'd performed Shakespeare in a high school production. I didn't consider myself an actress, but I wanted to participate. Afterward, my grandmother told me how well I did. She even tossed out the idea of a future in acting! I had no plans for that, but her uplifting words bolstered my shaky teenage self-esteem.

Reflecting on the squandered opportunity with Seth, I hope never to miss a chance like that again. When we share our strength with someone else, we can extend the love of God He has generously shown us.

GOD MADE HIM FAST

Many years later, I planned to run another race. That spring, our family drove past a small airport near our home. My sons — Calvin and

Wilson — noticed a promotion for a 5K in a few weeks on the airport grounds.

Both asked if we could run this race, their first. Calvin showed particular interest. Encouraged by my children's desires, I agreed to sign up and run with them.

I had not run a race in 15 years, but I took on this challenge for my children. To prepare, we trained by going for jogs together. Wilson impressed me with his stamina. Calvin, though, surprised me with how much he enjoyed running. For Wilson and me, running was an act of discipline. Not only did Calvin like running, but he was faster than I'd realized compared to when he played soccer games. I tried to train alongside him on rare occasions but couldn't keep up — though he was just 8 years old.

When race day arrived, I instructed Calvin to run as fast as he could for as long as he wanted. I encouraged him by sharing Proverbs 17:22: "A merry heart does good like a medicine" (MEV). Then, I told Calvin about the Scottish Olympic gold medalist Eric Liddell. Liddell believed God had made him fast, and I affirmed to Calvin that God had made him fast, too. Liddell said when he ran, he felt God's pleasure. I encouraged my son to run fast and delight in God's pleasure. Running in the way God made his little body zip down the track made my son's heart merry, and I wanted to

help Calvin understand God is pleased when we delight in His gifts.

Calvin set his own pace and never looked back, and he was the fastest child in the 10-and-under category. He also outpaced most of the adults, including me. A few months later, he ran two additional 5Ks. Awarding Calvin first place in his age group, one announcer described Calvin as having “rockets in his shoes.”

Calvin experienced God’s delight and a merry heart as he competed in races. My heart fills with gladness as I observe my children do what they enjoy — much as I imagine God takes delight when He sees His children embrace the merriment He gives us.

UNEXPECTED FRUIT

In a small church congregation, new people stand out. So, I introduced myself when I found myself next to a woman I’d not met.

“I’m Paige,” smiling as she explained this was her first visit. As we conversed, Paige divulged she had been adopted as a baby, and her husband passed away, leaving her a young widow.

After the service concluded, I posed a question to Paige, but not before I weighed it from every angle and questioned whether it was too soon to take the risk. I sensed the

Lord's nudge and acknowledged His wisdom often runs counter to our own. Proverbs 3:5-6 reminds us that leaning on the Lord's wisdom — and not our own — is an act of trust. I wanted to trust, even when I felt awkward, leaving the results to God.

"Would you like to get together this week?" I wanted Paige to feel welcome and understood the difficulty of joining a new church as a woman on her own. I had been in that position years before. Paige readily accepted, but she called to cancel on the night we planned to gather.

"It's so rainy," she explained. "I thought we might not want to get out in this weather." She'd recently returned from work and just wanted to stay home, warm and dry. I told her I understood. She cheerfully reminded me she would see me at church the following week.

Paige didn't attend the next service or any other at our church. I reflected on our single phone call. Something about her tone during that rainy night told me she might have been relieved to cancel. *Did I do something wrong? What if I seemed too insistent?* I felt awkward about calling again. Perhaps she agreed to meet with me only out of courtesy.

I haven't seen Paige again, but I still endeavor to connect with those who appear alone or uncertain about attending church. Sowing seeds

of friendship with Paige didn't result in fruit, but I wasn't in charge of that. God's guidance for me consisted of trusting Him with "all my heart" (Proverbs 3:5) and acting on that trust. Leaning on God's wisdom allows me to leave the outcome of my obedience to Him. Maybe the fruit of that obedience looks different than I sometimes expect.

God teaches us wisdom through His Word as His Spirit illuminates the Bible. By acting on that wisdom, as I aimed to do with my pep talk to Calvin at his first race, as I sought to do by offering friendship to Paige, we receive even more wisdom from God. During my uncertainty about thwarted efforts to connect with Paige, God revealed more of His character to me, instructing me about what was my responsibility — and what was His. God is powerful and loving enough to unfold His wisdom through our foibles, as He showed me in my regret over a missed opportunity to encourage Seth.

God's faithfulness to teach me His ways through my obedience and mistakes reminds me how much He wants us to receive and walk in His wisdom. We don't need to know much to embrace God's wisdom — we need to prioritize pursuing it.

Allison Wilson Lee is a homeschool teacher and freelance writer from Belle Isle, Florida.

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