

THE PURSUIT OF WISDOM IS A MARK OF DISCERNMENT

YEAR: KNEEL / FOCUS: LIVING IN WISDOM / SERIES: PROVERBS

BIG TRUTH: THE PURSUIT OF WISDOM IS A MARK OF DISCERNMENT

Proverbs 2:9-15; 14:8; 16:2, 21; 21:2; 22:3; 28:26; Philippians 1:9-11

BIBLE VERSE: PROVERBS 17:24; 14:8

"The discerning sets his face toward wisdom, but the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth." Proverbs 17:24

"The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way, but the folly of fools is deceiving." Proverbs 14:8

BIG IDEAS

- Discernment is the ability to see the difference between what is wise and foolish.
- Discernment values wisdom over possessions and fame.
- Discernment pursues wisdom even when others do not.

BIBLE PASSAGE: HEBREWS 5:11-6:1

KNEEL: LIVING IN WISDOM

The Kneel Year is an exploration of what it means to worship God with our all (Luke 10:26-28) and to use our influence to lead others to do the same. We know that as we pursue a life of worship, we will pursue a life of both wisdom and mission. Throughout this year we will study and pursue the wisdom of God through the book of Proverbs and the mission of God through the book of Acts, and we will learn how both of these things must inform and shape our influence as Jesus followers!

SERIES AIMS



Every student should know...

- What wisdom is.
- Why wisdom is worthy to be pursued.
- How to grow in wisdom.



Every student should feel...

- Love for God who gives all wisdom.
- Satisfied and secure in the wisdom of God.
- Responsible to use their influence to live for Jesus alone.



Every student should strive to...

- Read through the book of Proverbs one time each month.
- Memorize the Bible verse each week.
- Repent of the ways they have not pursued God and His wisdom.



Every student should want...

- To fear the Lord and keep His commandments.
- To live their lives in pursuit of true wisdom.
- To guard their heart from all impurity.

GUIDES AND WORKOUTS

The Guide provides a commentary page on each week's Bible verse and on each Big Idea that unpacks the Big Truth. Each week also includes a Student Workout as a resource to help the student pursue spiritual disciplines on their own. Additionally, each week has a Family Workout that helps equip parents and guardians to have spiritual conversations with their student.



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Those with discernment determine to live wisely.

"The discerning sets his face toward wisdom..." 17:24

- To determine to do something is to set your mind and heart on it. It means that you will accomplish whatever you set before you by any means necessary. To have discernment is to be able to grasp or understand obscure things. This means that you can see things in people or situations that aren't easily seen by most people.
- The discerning know that living wisely is the best way to please God. People with discernment determine to live wisely. They understand that in order to do this, they must determine and purpose to do it. Living wisely is not a small decision. It is something that requires sacrifice and discipline.

It is foolish to focus on the things of the world.

"but the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth." 17:24

"but the folly of fools is deceiving." 14:8

- Those who lack discernment do not see the value of wise living. Instead, they focus on the things of the world. Their hearts are focused on the temporal things of this life. They see only what is here now and do not think of the life that is to come.
- This is foolishness and leads to foolish living. Life is wasted when it is lived this way. This type of living is folly and deceptive. It seems like a good life now, but in the end, a person realizes that they have wasted their lives on pointless things.

The wise live in a discerning way.

"The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way..." 14:8

- Wisdom and discernment go hand in hand. Those who are wise have discernment. They have the ability to grasp obscure things and to see truth about difficult situations. They have the wisdom and discernment to understand people and discern how situations will play out.
- This type of wisdom is only possible with a relationship with God. Without the help of the Holy Spirit, this type of discernment isn't possible. A wise person lives a discerning life. He or she puts into practice the wisdom that they gain. They use the wisdom to make smart choices that are obedient to God's Word and reveal a heart that desires to please Him.

THE PURSUIT OF WISDOM IS A MARK OF DISCERNMENT

BIG IDEA #1: DISCERNMENT IS THE ABILITY TO SEE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT IS WISE AND FOOLISH.¹

[THIS]

In life we are often faced with the choice of what is wise and what is foolish. The wise choice is not always the choice we want to make. It seems less appealing because it feels limiting and restrictive in nature. The foolish choice feels freeing and fun, but it always leads to consequences that are hard to face. Sometimes the consequences are mild and only make us uncomfortable; other times they are more than we ever thought they would be. Discernment isn't a natural ability or something that some people are born with the ability to do better than others. Scripture teaches us that every person who is a follower of Jesus can have discernment. When we read Proverbs 14:8 we know that anyone who knows Jesus can acquire discernment. This means that no one has to live a foolish life. We all can live wise lives in obedience to God. We can seek wisdom and grow in discernment. We just have to turn away from the foolish things of this world and turn to our Father in heaven.

[THEREFORE]

How has the world defined discernment? How has this definition distorted what biblical discernment is?

The world says discernment is knowing the future or some supernatural ability that only certain people have. It's treated as a mystical ability. God's Word says that it is something all of His people can acquire as they seek Him. We see this in Proverbs 2:9-15. Those who seek wisdom find it and grow in discernment. It is not some mystical ability only a few have.

[THIS]

When a person gains discernment, they gain the ability to see the difference between what is foolish and what is wise. Often, we mistakenly think this type of decision making comes as a person ages, but God's Word teaches that this type of wisdom can come as a person grows in his or her spiritual walk. When a believer grows spiritually, no matter his or her age, they can grow in discernment. This discernment enables them to determine if their decisions are wise or foolish. They are able to look at any situation and determine the wisdom of it. This helps them live for God and in turn expand His kingdom. Discernment enables a person to make the choice not to waste his or her life on the temporal things of this world. Instead, they wisely choose to build into their eternity. As followers of Christ, we all should seek and desire to grow in discernment. We should want to know the difference between what is wise and foolish because our greatest desire should be to please God with our lives.

[THEREFORE]

How does the world teach that it doesn't matter if you make foolish choices?

The world teaches that we should just learn from our mistakes. There is a sense that everyone should "sow their wild oats", but God's Word teaches obedience to His Word always. 1 Corinthians 3:19 and Proverbs 18:2 remind us that the world's wisdom is actually foolishness and shouldn't be followed.

How is discernment not just a "gut feeling" or intuition?

Often discernment is mistaken for an emotion. Discernment comes from wisdom and growing in a knowledge of the Lord and His Word. Psalm 119:125 reminds us that discernment comes from understanding and knowledge.

1. Proverbs 14:8: Those with discernment seek wisdom and use it to follow God. The foolish disregard wisdom and lack discernment.

THE PURSUIT OF WISDOM IS A MARK OF DISCERNMENT

BIG IDEA #2: DISCERNMENT VALUES WISDOM OVER POSSESSIONS AND FAME.²

[THIS]

Collecting things and acquiring material things is easy to do in this life. If we are not careful, we can easily become consumed with our possessions. Instead, of pursuing Christ, we pursue the acquisition of material things. We value the earthly possessions like our homes, cars, clothing, and other things that we buy with money. We value the things we use for entertainment more than we value knowing and growing in our relationship with Christ. Discernment teaches us to value wisdom over these things. Discernment is the ability to see the futility in pursuing material possessions. We understand that we shouldn't waste our time or money investing in temporal things that will not last. Instead, we should pursue wisdom by pursuing a knowledge of God through a study of His Word. We should spend our time praying and growing in our relationship with Him. Discernment values wisdom above worldly things and places a higher value on God than on anything else in this world.

[THEREFORE]

What earthly possessions do you place a higher value upon than your relationship with God?

James 1:14 teaches us that we are enticed and lured away from God by our desires. We are lured by earthly possessions. They can easily cause us to love them more than we love God. 1 John 2:17 teaches us the futility in loving the things of the world. Instead, we are to value wisdom and a knowledge of God more than our possessions.

[THIS]

Being known in this life is a pursuit that can become a snare to us if we are not careful. We can fall into the trap of wanting to be an influencer, or a person who leads others. The idea of an influencer is someone whose life makes an impact on someone else's. In our culture today, people desire this title just to be known, not because they desire to make Jesus known. They want to be known as an influencer, to have the fame of an influencer, but not because they want to tell others about Jesus. We see this in the desire to have videos go viral or social media posts become popular and have many likes. Discernment teaches us that wisdom is to be valued more than this. Discernment teaches that we should seek to make Jesus famous and not ourselves. It shows us that seeking fame isn't what is important nor is it what will bring us happiness or lasting joy. Discernment leads us to make much of Jesus and little of us ourselves.

[THEREFORE]

How can we fall prey to the desire to be known in this world and miss out on fulfilling our purpose in making much of Jesus?

Our selfish nature leads us to desire to make much of ourselves. Instead of seeking to make Jesus known, we desire instead to make ourselves known. This is our sin nature seeking to satisfy its selfishness. John 3:30 and Isaiah 61:1 remind us that our purpose is to decrease as Jesus increases. This means that as we become more like Him, our sin nature diminishes, and we seek to make Him known.

Do you value wisdom? What in your life reveals that you value wisdom over fame and possessions?

We know we value wisdom when we seek it. Proverbs 12:15 and 18:15 teach us that those who desire wisdom and value it seek it. When our lives show that we study God's Word and seek Him through prayer, we reveal that we value wisdom above all other things.

2. Proverbs 17:24: *Those who have discernment value it over the things of the world.*

THE PURSUIT OF WISDOM IS A MARK OF DISCERNMENT

BIG IDEA #3: DISCERNMENT PURSUES WISDOM EVEN WHEN OTHERS DO NOT.³

[THIS]

The author of Hebrews admonished and encouraged his readers to grow in knowledge and wisdom so that they might be ready for their eternal home. In Hebrews 5:14, he writes about wisdom calling it solid food that is for mature believers only who have great discernment. They have acquired this discernment by constant practice. To increase in skill in this life, one must practice. The old adage “practice makes perfect” rings true when we consider the pursuit of wisdom that is required to become a mature follower of Christ. It is not a casual pursuit, but instead a life’s ambition to become more and more like Jesus. Those who desire to please God will pursue wisdom because as they obey Him, they will gain discernment. They will grow in their ability to distinguish right from wrong and this will lead to their understanding that wisdom is the most important thing they can gain.

[THEREFORE]

Read Hebrews 5:11-6:1. Do you pursue milk or spiritual meat? What in your life reveals what you are pursuing?

Those who are not actively pursuing wisdom are satisfying themselves with milk. Milk is not hearty enough to mature a follower of Christ. Followers of Christ need to pursue wisdom in order to grow in their spiritual walk and increase in their Christlikeness.

[THIS]

Not every follower of Christ will pursue wisdom. Often, we will find ourselves alone on the narrow path pursuing Christ. Even those who have experienced salvation may not consistently pursue wisdom. Instead, they may become distracted by the things of the world and pursue those instead. Even though others may not pursue wisdom and value it above all other things, discernment teaches us that we should still pursue it. Discernment leads us to seek after wisdom even if no one else is seeking it. This understanding will cause us to cast aside any inhibition or hesitancy to stand alone in our pursuit. Instead, we will only seek to grow in our knowledge and understanding of God so that we might please Him. This is true discernment guiding our lives and maturing us as believers.

[THEREFORE]

What are some challenges to pursuing wisdom when others are not?

2 Timothy 3:12 and John 15:18 teach us that those who follow Christ will experience persecution for His sake. This means that as we pursue wisdom and a knowledge of Him, we will experience the ridicule and persecution from others. This can be a challenge to us and tempt us to stop.

How can you discipline yourself to pursue wisdom even when no one else is pursuing it?

Psalm 34:8 tells us that when we taste and see that God is good, we take refuge in Him. This psalm teaches us that God is our refuge and also that He can be known in a way that we see and understand His goodness. We will make the time and center our lives around pursuing His wisdom when we have encountered Him in such a way that we have tasted His goodness and seen His kindness, grace, and mercy.

3. Proverbs 18:15: *Those with discernment seek wisdom above all other things. They do so even when other people are not doing so.*