

## got wisdom? Intro Pt 1

Much of scripture, Old Testament and New Testament alike, puts a high premium on the pursuit and possession of wisdom. Wisdom in its most general sense entails the skillfulness to formulate a plan and to carry it out in the best and most effective manner. It goes beyond knowledge and understanding and becomes “know-how”.

This is why in scripture we are often urged to seek wisdom above all things (Pro 4:7), but not just any kind of wisdom. Because there is an obvious difference between Godly wisdom and worldly wisdom, we are encouraged as believers to seek Godly wisdom over all others (1 Cor 3:19-20).

Having godly wisdom means we strive to see life from God’s perspective and act accordingly, often requiring us to do what is opposite our natural inclinations. Godly wisdom goes against the “conventional wisdom” of the day (1 Cor 1:27-29); it’s not focused on the popular self-preservation but on the kingdom of God.

Because none of us are born wise; the primary way we gain godly wisdom is by learning God’s Word and applying it to our lives (Ps 119:98-100,130,169). We can also develop godly wisdom by carefully selecting those whom we look up to and who we journey through life with us (Prov 13:20; 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1).

One other way to gain or receive Godly wisdom is to simply ask for it (2 Chron 1:10-11; Prov 2:3-6; Jas 1:5-8). According to James, there are four classes or categorizations of wisdom: earthly wisdom, intellectual wisdom, devilish wisdom, and the wisdom *from above* (Jas 3:13-17).

We must pursue Godly wisdom because God’s wisdom has no match and is distinguishably superior to any other kind of wisdom on the earth (Mk 6:1-2). As proof of this, the wisdom from above expresses itself in mighty works and is not merely a verbal, theoretical, or vocabulary wisdom; not powerful talks, but mighty works (Ps 104:24; Prov 3:19).

Of the Old Testament books, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon are considered to be the wisdom books. For the next several weeks, we look toward Ecclesiastes to consider the wisdom of “the preacher” concerning mortality, time, folly and foolishness, suffering, life, consciousness, and existence.

In Hebrew, the book of Ecclesiastes is called “**Qoheleth**” (Koheleth) which means “preacher” (cf. 1:1), suggesting one who speaks to an assembly. The Septuagint, a Greek version of the Old Testament, called it “**Ekklesiastes**”, which also means “preacher” but is derived from “ekklesia”, meaning “assembly”.

This is important when we understand that Solomon, as author, is at the end of his life at the time of his writing and is giving us his perception of life and its pursuits. Realizing how

much of his life he wasted on “folly”, he looked back on his folly with regret, pointing us to a better, simpler life lived in light of God’s direction (Ecc 12:13–14).

Essentially, Ecclesiastes presents us with a naturalistic vision of life that sees it through distinctively human eyes. Yet, it ultimately recognizes the rule and reign of God in the world. This more humanistic quality makes the book especially appealing to those who have seen more than their fair share of pain and instability in life but who still cling to their hope in God.

Solomon, as the Preacher, wondered out loud what many have asked: ***“What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?” (1:3).*** In other words, what value or purpose is there for living? What is the meaning of life? He asks this after having been blessed with the ability to explore the rewards of wisdom, pleasure, great wealth, and work.

One of the keywords we find in this book is “vanity”. It occurs 35 times in 29 verses. It means “futility, uselessness, nothingness.” But a key phrase to be noted is “under the sun”. It is found 29 times in 27 verses. It suggests that this message of vanity is true when one looks at life purely from an earthly perspective. Leave God and the afterlife out of the equation, and life is truly vanity!

Solomon’s view of life is a view that admits problems and shortcomings and recognizes inequities and uncertainties. Solomon wanted his readers to face the fact that life has its puzzles: we can’t figure out everything; we all face enigmas; our days are filled with frustrations; and life seems like a riddle.

It’s a picture of the futility of modern living. We gain something, but we can’t enjoy it. We work for wealth but then lose it. We acquire education but are still miserable. Solomon’s wisdom teaches us that life is long and difficult and that much of our time is spent on vanity.

He is not inviting us to despise our lives, or our work, or our possessions, or the pleasures in life. He is instead instructing us that life is so much more than these things (Jn 10:10). His view of life has two positive recommendations. One, which He makes repeatedly throughout his book, is to enjoy life. The other is to fear God; to trust, obey, serve, and worship Him.

We’ve all seen that much of our human efforts seem futile and fruitless, and life has much that we simply cannot understand. In the end, none of us will be consumed with who we voted for, did we wear a mask or not, whether we had an Android or an iPhone, if we won all the internet battles, etc. The only thing that will matter is did we live our lives for God in Jesus Christ.