

We will continue working on “Defining Wisdom” today with “More on Defining Wisdom.”

I think I am making some things muddled, so we are going to work on this a bit more.

## I. Not commands but with ethical responsibility

### A. Review:

#### 1. Early lesson: Distinguishing Commands from Proverbs

Proverbs are different from commandments, they sometimes sound as exacting as a commandment, but they mean to give insight, not orders.

#### 2. Last week: Defining Wisdom gave us these points

OT wisdom is “the teaching of a personal God who is holy and just and who expects those who know him to exhibit his character in the many practical affairs of life.”<sup>1</sup>

OT wisdom: skill in living comes from the human will in subjection to God

OT wisdom: because in submission to God, has an ethical basis (right and wrong)

### B. The question from examples:

#### 1. Proverbs

##### a. Mentioned last week (I think)

Pr 22.15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him.

##### b. A similar proverb

Pr 23.13 Do not hold back discipline from the child, Although you strike him with the rod, he will not die.

#### 2. Ephesians

<sup>1</sup> Louis Goldberg, “647 חֲכָמָה,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 283.

Ep 6.4 Fathers do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

### C. Analysis:

1. Ephesians is targeting **actions** or **behaviour**
2. Proverbs is targeting **thinking** or **philosophy**
3. The ethical dimension of Proverbs means you are responsible for how you **think**
4. The ethical dimension of biblical imperatives (commands) means you are responsible for how you **act**

### D. Another example: Compare these verses

Pr 11.30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who is wise wins souls.

Mt 28.19-20 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

1. The two passages are touching on the same **theme**
2. Matthew gives **a command** about the subject
3. Proverbs expresses **right thinking** about the subject (wisdom)

## II. Synonyms for wisdom in Proverbs

### A. Five main terms (acc. to Kidner)

"The book of Proverbs opens up the plain daylight of wisdom (*hokma*) into its rainbow of constituent colours. These all shade into one another, and any one of them can be used to represent the whole; yet there is some value in seeing them momentarily analysed and grouped."<sup>2</sup>

1. **Instruction (training)**

<sup>2</sup> Derek Kidner, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 17 (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1964), 34.

2. Understanding (insight)
3. Wise dealing (good sense)
4. Shrewdness (discretion)
5. Knowledge (learning)

## B. Instruction (training)

Pr 1.2-3 To know wisdom and **instruction**, To discern the sayings of understanding,<sup>3</sup> To receive **instruction** in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity;

1. “A quality of character as well as of mind”<sup>3</sup>
2. LXX primarily translates with παιδεύω – ‘education, child-training’

“From the usage and parallels in the OT, one must conclude that *yāsar* and *mûsār* denote correction which results in education.”<sup>4</sup>

‘A note of sternness’ (Kidner)<sup>5</sup>

3. Passing the field of the sluggard, overgrown and broken down, Solomon takes instruction (Pr 24.30-32)
4. Translated “discipline”
  - a. The “discipline” of the Lord (Pr 3.11)
  - b. The “discipline” of the rod (Pr 23.13)

“But most often, *mûsār* is oral instruction, hence the close association with the *tôrâ*.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Kidner, 34.

<sup>4</sup> Paul R. Gilchrist, “877 Yasar,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 386, BibleWorks, v.8.

<sup>5</sup> Kidner, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, 34.

<sup>6</sup> Gilchrist, “877 Yasar,” 387.

5. Companion word: “reproof” adds to the idea of verbal correction

Pr 3.11 My son, do not reject the **discipline** of the LORD Or  
loathe His **reproof**,

“The two terms together can be summed up as *discipline*; they give the reminder that wisdom is not to be had through extra-mural study: it is for disciples only.”<sup>7</sup>

C. Understanding (insight)

Pr 1.2 To know wisdom and instruction, To discern the sayings of  
**understanding**,

Pr 2.2 Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to  
**understanding**;

1. Two Hebrew synonyms (from same root)
2. Solomon’s prayer: “to **discern** between good and evil” (1 Ki 3.9)
3. Not just collecting data, ability to sift and discern between various strands of data
4. The attainment of discerning understanding (2.1-4)
  - a. Submission: Receive your father’s words (1)
  - b. Self-discipline: Make your ear attentive, incline your heart (2)
  - c. Zeal: Cry for discernment (3)
  - d. Value: Seek for as a treasure (4)
  - e. Consequence (2.5-9; rest of chapter an evaluation of the pursuit)

<sup>7</sup> Kidner, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, 34.

## D. Wise dealing (good sense)

Pr 1.3 To receive instruction in **wise behavior**, Righteousness, justice and equity;

### 1. Good sense, practical wisdom, *savoir-faire*

Savoir Faire: “capacity for appropriate action *especially*: a polished sureness in social behavior”<sup>8</sup>

In Westerns, “savvy”

### 2. Illustrations

- a. Eve saw the fruit as something to make one wise (sophisticated, savvy) (Gen 3.6)
- b. Abigail knew how to deal wisely and calmed David’s anger against her then husband (1 Sa 25.3)

It “relates to an intelligent knowledge of the reason. There is the process of thinking through a complex arrangement of thoughts resulting in a wise dealing and use of good practical common sense. Another end result is the emphasis upon being successful.”<sup>9</sup>

## E. Shrewdness (discretion)

Pr 1.4 To give **prudence** to the naive, To the youth knowledge and **discretion**,

1. Can degenerate into scheming and manipulation in the hands of an evil man [a kind of wise man, but without noble character]
2. But in a godly man we find a man who “knows his way about ... he knows the ropes”<sup>10</sup>
  - a. Takes the trouble to find out how things work

<sup>8</sup> Frederick C. Mish, ed., *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

<sup>9</sup> Louis Goldberg, “2253 Sakal,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 877, BibleWorks, v.8.

<sup>10</sup> Kidner, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, 35.

- b. Looks into all matters related to the decision at hand
  - c. Knows the people involved, what moves them, where they will likely fail
  - d. Realistic (22.3)
3. Discretion = ‘the power of forming plans’<sup>11</sup>

“The prudent one does not vaunt his knowledge (Prov 12:23), ignores an insult (Prov 12:16), acts with knowledge (Prov 14:8), looks where he is going (Prov 14:15), sees danger and acts appropriately (Prov 22:3; 27:12), and is crowned with knowledge (Prov 14:18).”<sup>12</sup>

## F. Knowledge (learning)

Pr 1.4-5 To give prudence to the naive, To the youth **knowledge** and discretion,<sup>5</sup> A wise man will hear and increase in **learning**, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel,

1. Not just knowledge of facts, but knowledge of truth and of God himself

Pr 2.5-6 Then you will discern the fear of the LORD And discover the **knowledge** of God.<sup>6</sup> For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth *come* **knowledge** and understanding.

2. Learning implies that the knowledge of truth isn’t simply given and received [set of facts], but *grasped*.

“As with the root meaning ‘take, seize,’ the ‘grasping’ is with the mind and hence ‘perceiving’ is the nuance prominent in this derivative.”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Toy, quoted by Kidner, 35.

<sup>12</sup> Ronald B. Allen, “1698 ‘ormah,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 697–98, BibleWorks, v.8.

<sup>13</sup> Walter C Kaiser, “1124 leqach,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 482, BibleWorks, v.8.

## Conclusion:

These synonyms give us a comprehensive picture of wisdom.

We have used a 'short-form' definition emphasizing the idea of 'skill with ideas or knowledge'.

This skill involves:

- A comprehensive understanding of people, circumstances, motivations, behaviours, probabilities and facts
- A lifetime of learning
- A commitment to personal growth, especially in the biblical context, spiritual growth

Wisdom doesn't come overnight, but over time.

Wisdom doesn't arrive, it progresses.

Wisdom isn't cocksure, but confident, and contributes to the success of God's kingdom in the world.