

SCRIPTURE STUDY GUIDE

Godly Wisdom

vs.

Worldly Wisdom

What God Says Wisdom and Understanding Are

*Key Passages: Job, Proverbs, Psalms, Deuteronomy,
1 Corinthians, James, NKJV*

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I. STUDY OVERVIEW

Framing Questions

Where does Scripture say wisdom begins, and where does it say understanding comes from?

What does Scripture say God will do to “the wisdom of this world,” and what outcomes does it show for “earthly” wisdom?

Purpose

This study tracks how Scripture defines wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. It also places God’s wisdom beside man’s wisdom, using the Bible’s own contrasts, sources, and outcomes.

Scriptural Context

These passages come from Wisdom writings (Job, Proverbs, Psalms), the Law (Deuteronomy), and New Testament letters (1 Corinthians, James). Together they show where wisdom comes from, how it is recognized, and how God speaks about “the wisdom of this world.”

II. ANCHOR PASSAGES

Core Definitions and Contrast

“Wisdom and understanding are with Him.” — Job 12:13

“Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.” — Job 28:28

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.” — Proverbs 9:10

“Through Your precepts I get understanding.” — Psalm 119:104

“For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.” — Proverbs 2:6

“The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.” — 1 Corinthians 3:19

Factual Observations: Wisdom and understanding are stated as being “with Him” (Job 12:13). Wisdom is stated as “the fear of the Lord” (Job 28:28), and it is called “the beginning” of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). Understanding is stated as coming “through Your precepts” (Psalm 119:104). Wisdom, knowledge, and understanding are stated as coming from the LORD, and specifically “from His mouth” (Proverbs 2:6). “The wisdom of this world” is stated as “foolishness with God” (1 Corinthians 3:19).

Pattern Notes: Pairing: “wisdom and understanding” appear joined (Job 12:13). Source language: “with Him” (Job 12:13) and “from His mouth” (Proverbs 2:6). Beginning language: “the fear of the

LORD is the beginning” (Proverbs 9:10). Contrast language: “wisdom of this world” set against “with God” (1 Corinthians 3:19).

Sequence Pattern: Beginning statement: “the fear of the LORD” is placed first as the “beginning of wisdom.” Source statement: wisdom is traced to the LORD and to His “mouth” (Proverbs 2:6), then understanding is traced to God’s “precepts” (Psalm 119:104).

III. PROGRESSIVE PASSAGE STUDY

1. Wisdom’s Starting Point: Fear of the LORD

Proverbs 9:10 (NKJV)

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Job 28:28 (NKJV)

And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.’

Proverbs 1:7 (NKJV)

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Factual Observations: Wisdom is stated to have a “beginning,” and that beginning is “the fear of the LORD.” Wisdom is stated as “the fear of the Lord” in direct wording (Job 28:28).

Pattern Notes: Repeated phrase: “the fear of the LORD” appears as a defining root. Repeated structure: “beginning of” appears in how Scripture starts the definition.

2. Understanding Tied to God’s Instruction and Precepts

Psalms 119:104 (NKJV)

Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

Proverbs 4:5-7 (NKJV)

Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; Love her, and she will keep you. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.

Factual Observations: Understanding is stated as coming “through Your precepts.” Scripture places “wisdom” alongside “instruction” (Proverbs 1:7). The commands “get wisdom” and “get understanding” are joined as a pair throughout Proverbs 4.

Pattern Notes: Repeated words: “understanding,” “precepts,” “instruction.” Directional language: understanding is gained through something God gives (precepts).

3. Source: The LORD Gives, His Mouth Speaks

Proverbs 2:6 (NKJV)

For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Job 12:13 (NKJV)

With Him are wisdom and strength, He has counsel and understanding.

Factual Observations: Wisdom is stated as something “the LORD gives.” Knowledge and understanding are stated as coming “from His mouth.”

Pattern Notes: Source markers: “with Him,” “gives,” “from His mouth.” Paired terms: “wisdom,” “knowledge,” “understanding” appear together in both passages.

4. A Warning Against Self-Sourced Understanding

Proverbs 3:5-7 (NKJV)

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil.

Factual Observations: Scripture gives a direct instruction not to “lean” on “your own understanding.” The instruction is paired with “Trust in the LORD.” The command “do not be wise in your own eyes” follows immediately.

Pattern Notes: Contrast: “the LORD” versus “your own.” Body-language verbs: “trust” and “lean” show dependence language. Sequence: trust → lean not → acknowledge Him → He shall direct.

5. Wisdom and Understanding Displayed Through God’s Commands Before Others

Deuteronomy 4:5-6 (NKJV)

Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’

Factual Observations: Wisdom and understanding are connected to “observe them” — God’s statutes and judgments in context. Wisdom and understanding are stated as being “in the sight of the peoples.” They become visible to those around through obedience to God’s word.

Pattern Notes: Repeated pair: “wise and understanding.” Evidence language: “in the sight of the peoples.” Sequence: statutes given → observe them → wisdom and understanding displayed → nations take notice.

6. God’s Stated Verdict on Worldly Wisdom

1 Corinthians 3:19 (NKJV)

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their own craftiness.”

1 Corinthians 1:20-21 (NKJV)

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

Factual Observations: Scripture states “the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.” Scripture asks directly whether God has “made foolish the wisdom of this world.” The passage also states that through worldly wisdom the world “did not know God.”

Pattern Notes: Repeated phrase: “wisdom of this world.” God-centered action: “God made foolish” places the outcome in God’s hand. Contrast: world’s wisdom ↔ God’s wisdom. Result: the world through its wisdom did not know God.

7. Wisdom Shown in Conduct Versus “Earthly” Wisdom

James 3:13-18 (NKJV)

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Factual Observations: Wisdom and understanding are tested by what is “shown” in “good conduct.” The phrase “meekness of wisdom” ties wisdom to a manner of action. James names earthly wisdom as “earthly, sensual, demonic” and names wisdom from above as “pure, peaceable, gentle.”

Pattern Notes: Test language: “Who is...” followed by “Let him show.” Visible evidence: “good conduct,” “works,” “meekness.” Direct contrast: earthly wisdom ↔ wisdom from above. Sequence in James 3: claim → test by conduct → two wisdoms named and described → fruit of righteousness.

IV. PATTERN & STRUCTURAL MAP

Source pattern: “with Him” and “from His mouth” place wisdom, knowledge, and understanding in God as the source (Job 12:13; Proverbs 2:6).

Beginning pattern: “The fear of the LORD” is stated as the beginning and definition-root for wisdom (Proverbs 9:10; Job 28:28).

Instruction pattern: Understanding is gained “through Your precepts,” and wisdom is tied to “observe them” (Psalm 119:104; Deuteronomy 4:6).

Contrast pattern: “Wisdom of this world” is named and judged by God as “foolishness” (1 Corinthians 3:19; 1 Corinthians 1:20).

Evidence pattern: Wisdom is not kept abstract; it is “shown” in conduct (James 3:13). Deuteronomy 4:6 confirms the same: wisdom and understanding are visible “in the sight of the peoples.”

V. CROSS-REFERENCE CONNECTIONS

- Job 28:28 ↔ Proverbs 9:10
- Proverbs 2:6 ↔ Job 12:13
- Psalm 119:104 ↔ Deuteronomy 4:6
- Proverbs 3:5 ↔ 1 Corinthians 3:19
- 1 Corinthians 1:20 ↔ 1 Corinthians 3:19
- James 3:13 ↔ Deuteronomy 4:6

VI. KEY OBSERVATIONS

- Scripture pairs “wisdom and understanding” and places them “with Him.”
- Scripture roots wisdom in “the fear of the LORD.”
- Scripture traces understanding to God’s “precepts” and “instruction.”
- Scripture states the LORD “gives wisdom,” and “from His mouth” come “knowledge and understanding.”
- Scripture names “the wisdom of this world” and calls it “foolishness with God.”
- Scripture tests wisdom by what a person “shows” in “good conduct.”
- Scripture warns against leaning on “your own understanding.”
- Scripture identifies earthly wisdom as “earthly, sensual, demonic” and wisdom from above as “pure, peaceable, gentle.”

VII. WARNINGS & REBUKES

Proverbs 3:5 (NKJV)

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.

1 Corinthians 3:19 (NKJV)

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their own craftiness.”

1 Corinthians 1:20 (NKJV)

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

James 3:14-16 (NKJV)

But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

VIII. PROMISES OF GOD

Proverbs 2:6 (NKJV)

For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Proverbs 3:6 (NKJV)

In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

James 3:17-18 (NKJV)

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

IX. TIERED STUDY QUESTIONS

LEVEL 1 — OBSERVATION

1. In the anchor verses, list every phrase that states source: “with,” “from,” “gives.” Where do they point?
2. Mark each place wisdom is paired with another word (wisdom and ____). What pairs repeat?
3. In Proverbs 3:5, identify the two commands and the two objects they point toward.

LEVEL 2 — COMPARISON

1. Compare Job 28:28 with Proverbs 9:10. What shared phrase is used, and what shared placement is given to “fear of the LORD”?
2. Compare Psalm 119:104 with Deuteronomy 4:6. What do both connect to understanding: “precepts” and “observe”?
3. Compare 1 Corinthians 1:20 and 1 Corinthians 3:19. What repeated phrase is used for human wisdom, and what repeated verdict is stated?
4. Compare James 3:13-18 with Deuteronomy 4:6. How does each passage make wisdom visible to others?

LEVEL 3 — TEXTUAL SYNTHESIS

1. Trace this line using the verses’ words: “fear of the LORD” → “wisdom” → “from His mouth” → “precepts” → “understanding.” Use Job 28:28, Proverbs 2:6, Psalm 119:104, and Proverbs 9:10.
2. Trace this contrast using the verses’ words: “trust in the LORD” and “lean not on your own understanding” ↔ “wisdom of this world” and “foolishness with God.” Use Proverbs 3:5, 1 Corinthians 1:20, and 1 Corinthians 3:19.
3. Trace how wisdom is “shown”: “wise and understanding” → “show by good conduct” → “meekness of wisdom.” Use James 3:13 and compare with Deuteronomy 4:6 (“in the sight of the peoples”).

X. WHAT THE VERSES STATE

- Wisdom and understanding are “with Him.”
- “The fear of the Lord” is stated as wisdom.
- “The fear of the LORD” is stated as the beginning of wisdom.
- Understanding is gained “through Your precepts.”
- The LORD “gives wisdom.”
- From God’s “mouth” come “knowledge and understanding.”
- A person is commanded not to “lean” on “your own understanding.”
- God is stated to have “made foolish the wisdom of this world.”
- “The wisdom of this world” is stated as “foolishness with God.”
- Earthly wisdom is named as “earthly, sensual, demonic.”
- Wisdom from above is named as “pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits.”
- Wisdom and understanding are to be “shown” by “good conduct” with “meekness of wisdom.”

XI. FULL SCRIPTURE INDEX

Deuteronomy 4:5-8

Job 12:13

Job 28:28

Psalms 119:104

Proverbs 1:7

Proverbs 2:6

Proverbs 3:5-7

Proverbs 4:5-7

Proverbs 9:10

1 Corinthians 1:20-24

1 Corinthians 3:19

James 3:13-18