

UNDERSTANDING  
*Wisdom*

MARIA CURREY

COVER ART BY LISA TARPLEE

# CONTENTS

Introduction .....	xi
Lesson 1 Worldly Wisdom versus Word-ly Wisdom .....	17
Lesson 2 Wisdom Gone Awry .....	29
Lesson 3 Wait for Whispered Wisdom .....	37
Lesson 4 Wellspring of Wisdom .....	49
Lesson 5 Humility and Good Deeds .....	61
Lesson 6 Pure and Peace-Loving .....	69
Lesson 7 Considerate and Submissive .....	81
Lesson 8 Full of Mercy and Good Fruit .....	89
Lesson 9 Impartial and Sincere .....	97
Lesson 10 Pruned by God's Powerful P's .....	105
Endnotes	
Appendices	



# Lesson One

## WORLDLY VERSUS WORD-LY WISDOM

### WARMING WISDOM

Describe a time when you recall starting something with great joy and expectation only to have much different results than what you anticipated.

Wisdom is an attribute revered not only in Christian world thinking but by multiple world religions. One can find references to wise men worldwide, so it is important to define the differences between worldly wisdom and God's heavenly wisdom—the wisdom that comes from heaven, as described in James 3:17.

In the process of discovering the major differences between worldly and Word-ly wisdom, we will explore how God began a perfect work within Eve, perhaps a familiar biblical character, only to have her choice result in an unexpected, earth-altering outcome.

### WINNOWER WISDOM



1. Read Genesis 3:1-7, 13. Mark what interests or makes you pause. Note anything new or freshly noticed.

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her,*

*and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths (Gen. 3:1-7). Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate" (Gen. 3:13).*

2. In verse 6, why do you think Eve chose to eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

The Hebrew word for wisdom in this context, *sakal*, means "to be circumspect and hence intelligent, to make to understand or to be wise." Perhaps Eve thought eating the fruit would give her greater *sakal*: intelligence, wisdom, and understanding.<sup>1</sup>

3. Contrast Genesis 2:25 and 3:7.

*And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed (Gen. 2:25).*

*Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths (Gen. 3:7).*

4. In reality, what did Eve experience emotionally and spiritually by eating fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?
5. Read 1 Corinthians 10:12-13. As temptations deceive and draw us away from God's presence, according to these verses, how can we avoid and escape worldly temptations?
6. Let's turn our attention to Paul's descriptions of worldly wisdom in 1 Corinthians 1:17-20. Read and mark what strikes you within this passage.

*For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,*

*“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”*

*Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?*

- a. What discoveries did you glean from this passage regarding the wisdom of the world?
  
- b. How do unbelievers interpret the message of the cross? And in what ways does that interpretation match or differ from your own perspective?

Just as present-day *unbelievers* hear the message of Christ crucified, dead, buried, resurrected, and *alive* as foolishness, we, as *believers*, may read Genesis 3 and slap our heads with unbelief at Eve’s foolishness. But for her, the words spoken by the serpent were wise. Imagine the slithering satisfaction hissed from the serpent: “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

**E**VE WAS ATTRACTED TO THE VERY  
ESSENCE OF WHAT THE TREE OFFERED:  
KNOWLEDGE!

Eve was attracted not only to the fruit on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil but to the very essence of what it offered as well: knowledge! She thought she was going to gain intelligence, the power of knowledge from that tree. She saw that it “was desirable for gaining wisdom and she ate it.”



1. In contrast to the power Eve sought, what is the power offered through the message of the cross, according to 1 Corinthians 1:18 and 2:4-5?

2. Continue reading 1 Corinthians 1:21–2:15. Note and mark the contrasts between worldly wisdom and God’s wisdom. What differences do you discover?

<b>Worldly Wisdom</b>	<b>God’s Wisdom</b>

3. How is Christ described in 1 Corinthians 1:24 and 30? In what ways do these descriptions of Jesus resonate in your heart and mind?

Prayerfully revel in the detailed description of Christ as the power of God, the wisdom of God . . . for us wisdom from God . . . our righteousness, holiness, and redemption!

4. The wisdom referred to in 1 Corinthians 1:21 and 24 is *sophia*, defined as “insight into the true nature of things.” Describe the distinct differences between *sakal*, the wisdom Eve sought, and *sophia*, God’s pure and true wisdom.
5. According to 1 Corinthians 2:12-13, in what ways has God’s wisdom been instilled within believers’ hearts and how does this information stir your heart?

With a cursory review of 1 Corinthians 1–2, we find a distinct juxtaposition of Word-ly wisdom versus worldly wisdom. God’s wisdom is defined within these chapters as a product of the entire Godhead, originating with God the Father, manifested in Christ as our righteousness, holiness, and redemption (1:30), and spoken through the Holy Spirit, “expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words” (2:13). For a moment, be still and meditate on 1 Corinthians 2:6-7, reading it aloud.

*Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory (1 Cor. 2:6-7).*

Express thanks to God—sing, shout, clap, write a prayer, smile within—for the immeasurable gift of His wisdom!

For us to successfully win the battles and ultimately the war against worldly influences, we need continual biblical backup, the power of God’s Word! Wisdom is not an inherently automatic response of our hearts; by nature, we are sinful, but in the power of the Holy Spirit, we are released from sin’s grip to enjoy God’s amazing life (Rom. 8:5-8). Therefore, our hearts need reinforcement, a lining of God’s supernatural spiritual strength, which is only possible through His living and active Word.

**FOR US TO SUCCESSFULLY WIN THE BATTLES AND ULTIMATELY THE WAR AGAINST WORLDLY INFLUENCES, WE NEED CONTINUAL BIBLICAL BACKUP, THE POWER OF GOD’S WORD!**

There are myriad biblical references to wisdom, and we will dive more deeply into many of them throughout the course of this study; however, within Proverbs, wisdom is at the core of many practical life instructions.



Read and write out Proverbs 9:10.

1. What is “the fear of the LORD” and why is fear of the LORD important?

2. How are our attitudes related to fearing God? See Job 1:1, 9.
3. How does fearing God differ from the cowering fear portrayed in a horror film or in the irrational childhood fears some of us may have experienced?
4. How are understanding and wisdom interconnected? See Psalm 111:10.
5. Describe how fearing God may counter human fearfulness in your daily living. Be ready to discuss this in your small group.



1. Read Proverbs 8:12-13 and record what you discover.
2. Consider wonderful character qualities dwelling together in a beautifully appointed room. These qualities give the room distinctive appeal. Imagine, even, a beautiful fragrance. What are the qualities that surround wisdom according to Proverbs 8:12?



3. Create a description of this dwelling place filled with wisdom, prudence, knowledge, and discretion as if they were close friends, giving them lifelike qualities. You may choose to write a poem or draw a sketch, whatever form of interpreting the text helps you fully imagine the Scripture text. In class, you will be encouraged to share your description with a partner.

Because we are relational beings, from the days we are playful children, our imaginations focus on relationships. As a little girl, I remember playing with dolls, giving them names, nurturing them when “cold and frightened,” scolding them when they “needed correction,” and dwelling with them as “friends”! I remember watching my own daughter years ago as she mothered her bedroom full of children from Beanie Babies™ to Barbies™. When we approach God’s holy and living Word, it is important to wrap our arms relationally around the attributes we want Him to incorporate within our hearts, minds, and souls.

4. Meditate and pray over Proverbs 8:12, asking God to cultivate attributes of wisdom into your entire being; express your need for these life-giving qualities. Write to Him about whatever you may desire of His wisdom.

In class, share these qualities within a small group of three to four members.



1. Incredible promises are the result when we seek out wisdom. Below, list the activity and results involved in pursuing wisdom, according to each passage in Proverbs. An example is provided. There may not be specific answers for each blank, but fill in as applicable.

Roots of Wisdom		
Passage	Activity	Results
Proverbs 1:33	Listening	Live in safety, at ease, without fear or harm
Proverbs 2:1-5		
Proverbs 5:1-2		
Proverbs 8:6-7, 10, 34-35		
Proverbs 14:1-3		

2. Mark any ways the following thoughts and Scripture passages impact your heart and mind.
- a. We have been granted an active role in cultivating wisdom. A richer and fuller life of wisdom will result if we are willing to listen, to call—even to cry out—for wisdom, to search for, to pay attention to, and to choose the layers of instruction that come from God’s wisdom.
  - b. God is sovereign. He created every being, knows our every thought, sees what we cannot, understands all things, *and* in the midst of His unfathomable majesty, He loves us. He wants us to know Him deeply, to understand His ways, and to fall more completely in love with Him every day. We are His children. He desires a deeper relationship with us. In His Word, we are privileged to tap into the endless root system of His wisdom and to dwell under the protective spiritual shade of eternal wisdom!

- c *She is a tree of life to those who embrace her; and those who hold on to her are happy. The LORD founded the earth by wisdom and established the heavens by understanding. By His knowledge the watery depths broke open, and the clouds dripped with dew (Prov. 3:18-20 NLT).*

4. Consider and meditate on the following portions from Proverbs 8 and Romans 11 describing wisdom.

Proverbs 8:22-31:

*The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His work,  
the first of His acts of old.  
Ages ago I was set up,  
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.  
When there were no depths, I was brought forth,  
when there were no springs abounding with water.  
Before the mountains had been shaped,  
before the hills, I was brought forth,  
before He had made the earth with its fields,  
or the first of the dust of the world.  
When He established the heavens, I was there;  
when He drew a circle on the face of the deep,  
when He made firm the skies above,  
when He established the fountains of the deep,  
when He assigned to the sea its limit,  
so that the waters might not transgress His command,  
when He marked out the foundations of the earth,  
then I was beside Him, like a master workman,  
and I was daily His delight,  
rejoicing before Him always,  
rejoicing in His inhabited world  
and delighting in the children of man.*

Romans 11:33-36:

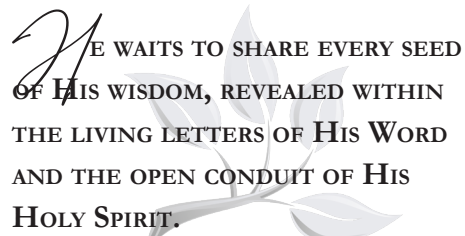
*Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways!*

*“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?”*

*“Or who has given a gift to Him that he might be repaid?”*

*For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen.*

As you are prompted, spend time thanking God for the privilege to pursue wisdom and to understand and love Him in new and life-changing ways. Record what you have discovered about His wisdom in a written prayer in the space below. He waits as the Master Gardener to share every seed of His wisdom, revealed within the living letters of His Word and the open conduit of His Holy Spirit.



**H**E WAITS TO SHARE EVERY SEED  
OF HIS WISDOM, REVEALED WITHIN  
THE LIVING LETTERS OF HIS WORD  
AND THE OPEN CONDUIT OF HIS  
HOLY SPIRIT.

### WATERING WISDOM

Pair up with a member of your study this week. Call each other to share what you are learning and how you are seeking to apply God's wisdom to everyday living. Hold one another accountable through prayer. Drop a note in the mail or send an email with shared seeds of wisdom.

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Address (optional):

### WILLING WISDOM

Decisively memorize God's Word. Begin to memorize James 3:13, 17-18 and Proverbs 3:18.

Write these verses on 3x5 cards; make multiple copies to place in strategic locations within your home and car—anywhere you will be likely to meditate on them.

**WIDENING WISDOM** (OPTIONAL)

For deeper understanding, carefully study (word by word, verse by verse) 1 Corinthians 1–2 and Proverbs 8 for . . .

<p><b>Observation</b> (What the text says)</p>	<p><b>Interpretation</b> (What your discoveries mean)</p>	<p><b>Application</b> (How you can apply to your own life)</p>