

WISDOM UNIVERSITY

PROVERBS 1:1-7

TOO MUCH INFORMATION



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Problem

TMI “Too Much Information” sums up our culture. We are drowning in a tsunami of information. The data stream that became a river that became an ocean is drowning us.

- Equivalent of 174 newspapers a day
- 80% get headaches & insomnia from TMI
- We consume 15.5 hours of media a day

Although there is a tsunami of information, there is a drought of wisdom. Why is that bad?

Effects

Without wisdom:

- we can't know what information is true.
- we can't know what information is important
- we won't be able to use information to make good decisions

Solution?

The great news is that Wisdom University (otherwise known as the book of Proverbs) is open for enrollment and it can help us learn what is true, what is important, and how to make good decisions.

CONTEXT

The Wisdom Books

God is the source of wisdom for all areas of life.

- **Job**: Wisdom for suffering
- **Psalms**: Wisdom for worshipping
- **Proverbs**: Wisdom for living
- **Ecclesiastes**: Wisdom for thinking
- **Song of Solomon**: Wisdom for loving

Proverbs Structure

- **Preparation for Wisdom** (1:1-7)
- **Principles of Wisdom** (1:8-9:18)
- **Practice of Wisdom** (10:1-31:31)

PROVERBS IS TRUTH
IN STREET CLOTHES
DEREK KIDNER

PROVERBS WILL STEP ON YOUR
TOES, BUT, IN DOING SO, WILL
DISCIPLINE YOU AND KEEP YOUR
FEET IN THE RIGHT PATH WHEN
YOU WALK IN THEIR LIGHT.
KENNETH KITCHEN



How can we learn what is true, what is important, and how to make good decisions?
Let's look at Wisdom University's catalog, starting with the core subjects.



1. WISDOM UNIVERSITY IS OPEN TO YOU (1-6)

The subjects (1-3)

(1) The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; (2) To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; (3) To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity.

"Proverb" means "likeness." A Proverb teaches wisdom by using comparisons and parables. In verses 1-3, wisdom is examined from lots of angles like a diamond, and reveals different qualities from different perspectives. Let's examine four of these dimensions:

- **Practical skill:** "To know wisdom." Whereas the Greek idea of wisdom was very philosophical and intellectual, the Hebrew word for "wisdom" meant practical skill in living a godly life. It was used to describe the skill of seamen (Ps 107:27), weavers (Ex. 35:26), administrators (1 Kgs. 3:28), and craftsmen (Ex. 31:6). So, it's not just knowledge. It's the ability to apply the principles of God's Word to everyday life challenges. A wise person knows how to relate to God, herself, her family, her community, and her nation.
- **Correction:** This word is translated as "instruction," but it's narrower than that. It's education through correction, similar to child-training. Wisdom is always profitable but not always comfortable.
- **Discernment:** "To perceive the words of understanding." ["For understanding words of insight" (NIV); "to receive instruction in wise dealing" (ESV)]. This is the ability to tell the difference between two things. Is this good or bad? Wise or foolish? Moral or immoral? Valuable or worthless? It is seeing things as God sees them. Proverbs resists the idea of blind or thoughtless obedience. Instead it calls us to exercise ourselves in rigorous analysis and understand why we do what we do.
- **Judicial insight:** "To receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity" (ESV) or "Instruction in prudent behavior, doing what is right, and just, and fair" (NIV). This means making right decisions about human actions, and also integrity between our thoughts and our actions. The standard for this is God's Law. Proverbs, therefore, is a practical, detailed, memorable, and culturally relevant application of God's moral law.

APPLICATION

♥ Whatever else you learn in life, you have to learn these subjects. Do you not see your need to learn practical wisdom? How to relate to God and others in everyday life? Do you not need divine education through divine correction? Will you not pray, "Give me discernment in a confusing world. Help me to make wise decisions in a world of multiple choices."

♥ "I thank you, Heavenly Teacher, that you have enrolled me in Wisdom University. You have made me wise to salvation. You have revealed truths to me by your Spirit. You've taught me lessons that I could never have learned by myself. Help me to submit to your direction and correction because I know you want to lead me in the right way." And help me to be a just judge in my daily court.

The students (4-6)

(4) To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. (5) A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels. (6) To understand a proverb and an enigma, the words of the wise and their riddles.

Who can enroll in these valuable courses? Verses 4-5 describe the typical students:

- **The immature:** This is the elementary class. Proverbs gives "subtilty" ["prudence" (NIV/ESV)] to the "simple." This word means naive and gullible, the easily persuaded or easily deceived. The basic root is 'to be wide open.' Such people have no filter or discrimination. But God can make even them to be wise. He can give them a biblical filter.
- **The young:** This is the intermediate class. It gives "knowledge and discretion to the young." The basic root of "discretion" is "long-term planning." Although young people are not usually associated with delayed gratification and long-term planning, God's Word can give this unique and vital ability.
- **The wise:** This is the most mature class and contains "the wise" and "the understanding" ["the discerning" (NIV)]. "Discerning" is from a nautical word that describes the rope-pulling that steered old ships. The one who studies these proverbs, will be able to steer a safe and true course through life. We will never reach a point in this life when we will have enough wisdom. We must be committed to life-long learning if we are to steer a right course to our final harbor.

What will the graduates be able to do? What is the Student Learning Outcome? Verse six tells us that they will be able to use the proverbs to solve the enigmas, puzzles, and riddles of life. They will not just know the proverbs, they will know the right proverbs to use at the right time and in the right way to get the right result.

APPLICATION

♥ Do you feel your lack of wisdom? Do not despair. This University is open to the simple, even to the naive and gullible. "Lord give me a biblical filter so that I'm not wide open to all the lies of this world. And help me to think long-term, not just about the here and now but heaven and the hereafter."

♥ No matter how wise you've become, if you are truly wise, you will realize that you can never have enough wisdom. In fact, possession of true wisdom produces the confession of a lack of wisdom (James 1:3). "Lord, never stop teaching me and help me never to stop learning."

THIS IS NOT TMI
(TOO MUCH INFORMATION),
THIS IS MII
(MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION)



Sounds like a great University! How do I get in?
There's only one entrance.



2. WISDOM UNIVERSITY HAS ONLY ONE ENTRANCE (7)

(7) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

The start of fearing God

The name for "LORD" here is Jehovah, God's covenant name, which expresses covenant relationship. Relationship comes before rules. Personal relationship must come before practical morality. A right relationship with God comes before a right relationship with people. The vertical precedes the horizontal. The door into Wisdom University says "Fear LORD" on it.

This is the first proverb and the key to all the others. Fearing God frames the first part of Proverbs (1:7 and 9:10) and appears in other places too (e.g. 15:33; 22:4; 23:17; 31:30). It is found throughout biblical wisdom literature. It is the heart of Old Testament religion (Deut. 6:5; Josh 24:14) and NT religion (Matt. 10:28; Acts 9:31; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 14:7).

The source of fearing God

Where does this fear come from?

- **Nature:** We fear him as creatures before our Creator
- **Power:** We fear him as weak before the Almighty
- **Sin:** We fear him as sinners before a holy Judge
- **Adoption:** We fear him as sons before our Father
- **Cross:** We fear him as saints saved by grace

NOTHING IS SO WELL FITTED TO PUT THE FEAR OF GOD, WHICH WILL PRESERVE MEN FROM OFFENDING HIM, INTO THE HEART, AS AN ENLIGHTENED VIEW OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST. THERE SHINE SPOTLESS HOLINESS, INFLEXIBLE JUSTICE, INCOMPREHENSIBLE WISDOM, OMNIPOTENT POWER, HOLY LOVE...[THERE SHINES] THE JUST JUDGE, THE MERCIFUL FATHER, THE WISE GOVERNOR. NOWHERE DOES JUSTICE APPEAR SO AWFUL, MERCY SO AMIABLE, OR WISDOM SO PROFOUND.

JOHN BROWN

The steps of fearing God

Ed Welch suggests that the fear of the Lord is a continuum we advance along when we begin to accurately perceive God and the world he has made. He represents it as movement along the following progression of attitudes:

Terror > Dread > Trembling > Astonishment > Awe > Reverence > Devotion > Trust > Worship

TO POSSESS THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS TO EMBRACE REALITY. IT SIGNALS THE ADOPTION OF A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW....IT DESCRIBES AN INFORMED AND ACCURATE PERSPECTIVE OF WHO GOD IS AND WHO I AM BEFORE HIM.

KENNETH KITCHEN

The signs of fearing God

Here are five signs that we fear God:

- We **listen** to his voice with care
- We **obey** his will with sincerity
- We **serve** him with loyalty
- We **worship** him with our hearts
- We **delight** in him with joy

THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THAT UNDEFINABLE MIXTURE OF REVERENCE, FEAR, PLEASURE AND JOY WHICH FILLS OUR HEARTS WHEN WE REALIZE WHO GOD IS AND WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR US.
SINCLAIR FERGUSON

THE REMARKABLE THING ABOUT FEARING GOD IS THAT WHEN YOU FEAR GOD, YOU FEAR NOTHING ELSE, WHEREAS IF YOU DO NOT FEAR GOD, YOU FEAR EVERYTHING ELSE
OSWALD CHAMBERS

The stupidity of not fearing God

But fools despise wisdom and instruction (7b).

There are four words for "fool" in Proverbs. The word here is from a root meaning "to be thick or dense." In the Bible's view, a thick person is someone who does not fear God. It's got nothing to do with IQ or academic qualifications. "Despise" means treat as of no value, as worthless.

The Savior and fearing God

Jesus embodied the fear of the Lord perfectly (Isa. 11:1-3). This shows us that fearing God and delighting in God are not opposing forces but two sides of the one coin.

APPLICATION

♥ If you've never feared God, you've not even got into Pre-K. Whatever you know, you don't know the most important subject of all. Hear Jesus's call, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29).

♥ "Help me to fear you not only as Creator, Governor, and Judge, but above all as my Father and Savior. Lord Jesus, your example and your cross teach me to fear God as he ought to be feared. Help me to show my fear by careful listening, faithful obedience, thoughtful pleasing, loyal service, hearty worship, and delightful joy.

DIG A DEEP FOUNDATION OF
GODLY FEAR IN YOUR LIFE,
IF YOU WANT TO BUILD
WISDOM HIGH IN YOUR LIFE.



TMI is a big problem, but TFL (the Fear of the Lord) is a bigger solution.
Let's review our problem, God's solution, and the action he requires.



CONCLUSION



FURTHER STUDY

Online Articles

- [Exchanging Fear for Fear](#) by Kevin DeYoung
- [What does it mean to Fear God?](#) by R. C. Sproul
- [Fearing God](#) (Tabletalk)

Books

- [A Proverbs-Driven Life](#) by Anthony Salvaggio
- [God's Wisdom for Navigating Life: A Year of Daily Devotions in the Book of Proverbs](#) by Tim Keller
- [The Forgotten Fear: Where Have All the God Fearers Gone?](#) By Al Martin
- [The Joy of Fearing God](#) by Jerry Bridges

Discussion Questions

- What practical steps can you take to reduce TMI syndrome?
- What's the difference between knowledge and wisdom?
- Can you think of a time that God taught you by correcting you?
- How can you train your children to be more discerning?
- Which class are you in: the immature, the young, or the wise?
- If you are in the "wise" class, what are you doing to keep learning about God?
- What's the difference between a believer's fear of God and an unbeliever's?
- Why and how did Jesus fear God?

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