

Knowledge, Understanding, and Wisdom

Commentary for March 16, 2015 — Beginning with Two Proverbs Passages

Read these two Scriptures in Proverbs:

**“The fear of YHWH is the beginning of knowledge:
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”**

• *Proverbs 1:7*

**“The fear of YHWH is the beginning of wisdom:
and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”**

• *Proverbs 9:10*

Well ... which is it? Is “**the fear of YHWH**” the “**beginning of knowledge**” or is it the “**beginning of wisdom**”? We can combine these two passages into a diagram:



The answer is both knowledge and wisdom begin with the fear of YHWH, as you probably figured out already. YHWH gives knowledge and eventually wisdom to those who fear Him.

“Yea,

**if you cry after [1] knowledge,
and lift up your voice for [2] understanding;**

**If you seek her [knowledge] as silver,
and search for her [understanding] as for hid treasures;**

**Then shall you [2] understand the fear of YHWH,
and find the [1] knowledge of God.**

**For YHWH gives [3] wisdom:
out of his mouth comes [1] knowledge and [2] understanding.”**

• *Proverbs 2:3–6*

This passage tells us that seeking after knowledge in general will yield understanding.¹ This especially occurs if your goal is to seek after God. If you have fear of YHWH, you will find knowledge, understanding, and wisdom — about God and about other things of God’s creation. Thus, we find it is indeed true:

**“The fear of YHWH is the beginning of wisdom:
and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”**

• *Proverbs 9:10*

¹ Jews reading this would never have diagrammed passages as I have done. These passages would have been read aloud to them. Through listening they would have heard and noted the subtly nuanced interplay of “knowledge,” “understanding,” and “wisdom.”

It involves a process that happens over time. It requires study. It requires thinking about what you studied, and it requires application (action) of what you learned and understood.

Wisdom about God is accomplished (as a gift from God) through knowledge of holy things, which in turn yields understanding. Solomon asked for the gift of wisdom and knowledge (they are a pair) so he could rule God's people Israel justly (2 Chronicles 1:11–12). The basis of all this is proper fear of YHWH. This fear is not outright terror, but it means acceptance, respect, and awe of God and all His actions in your life and throughout history.

“A scorner [toward God] seeks wisdom, and finds it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understands.”

• *Proverbs 14:6*

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him.”

• *James 1:5*

Christ was the perfect example for us, as prophesied by Isaiah:

“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots [this was Jesus, see Romans 15:12]:

And the spirit of YHWH shall rest upon him [which yields],

[1] **the spirit of wisdom** and [2] **understanding,**

[3] **the spirit of counsel** and [4] **might,**

[5] **the spirit of knowledge** and [6] **of the fear of YHWH;**

And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of YHWH: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears.”

• *Isaiah 11:1–3*

We have that same Spirit of YHWH (the power of God) within us now as Christ had when He was on earth, and as He has today in heaven, waiting to return. The knowledge we should seek has to do with God's will, both for others and for us, just as the apostle Paul writes to the *ekklesia* at Colosse:

“[We] do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”

• *Colossians 1:9*

The knowledge of God's will shall yield spiritual understanding and wisdom as we live out our lives.

“And be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

• *Romans 12:2*

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