

“Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?” (Job 28)

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Just for fun, I took a look at the best-selling self-help books on Amazon.com.¹ I think this list gives us some ideas as to what people want help with, and what they think is most important in life. The title of the top-selling book is one I can't even say because it has a four-letter word in it, but the subtitle is *A Counterintuitive Guide to Living the Good Life*.² The second book is one by Tony Robbins on financial freedom.³ The third book is about productivity.⁴ The other books are about thinking, self-control, relationships, fighting doubts, dealing with grief, developing good habits, and so on. Nothing really surprised me on the list, except that Gary Chapman's book on love languages is on there.⁵

Now think of all the self-help infomercials you've ever seen. A lot of them are about health. Some are about looks. Some are about finances. A few are about how to think better or be more productive. Basically, all of these self-help books and products promise a happier life.

There's nothing wrong with wanting better health, wanting to lose some weight, or wanting to be more productive. There's nothing wrong with wanting better relationships. There's nothing wrong with wanting to be happy. But a lot depends on how we define happiness. And a lot depends on why we want to be healthier and wealthier and how we go about chasing after the goal of self-improvement. Why do we want to be healthy? Why do we want to be more productive? Why do we want more money? How will we achieve these goals? What is their purpose?

Here's one thing I've noticed: I don't know that I've ever seen a self-help book or video that promises wisdom. We want better health. We want more money. We want pleasure. We want happiness. But do we want to be wise?

¹ <https://www.amazon.com/Best-Sellers-Books-Self-Help/zgbs/books/4736>, accessed March 18, 2017.

² Mark Manson, *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck: A Counterintuitive Guide to Living the Good Life* (New York: HarperAudio, 2016). This is the audio version of the book. The hardcover version is the eleventh book on the list.

³ Tony Robbins, *Unshakeable: Your Financial Freedom Playbook* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017). Again, this is the audio book version. The hardcover version is the sixth book on the list.

⁴ Gary Keller with Jay Papasan, *The One Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth behind Extraordinary Results* (Austin: Bard Press, 2013).

⁵ Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts* (Chicago: Northfield, 1992).

Wisdom is a bit of a harder sell than all of these other things. Wisdom isn't very sexy. We probably don't think enough about being wise people. But wisdom is what we need. If the world needs one thing—other than the obvious Sunday school answer (Jesus!) or love—it's wisdom. That's what we'll be talking about today.

What is wisdom? Here's the definition from one dictionary:

wis•dom \ 'wiz-dəm\ *noun*

[Middle English, from Old English *wīsdōm*, from *wīs* wise] before 12th century

- 1 a:** accumulated philosophic or scientific learning: KNOWLEDGE
- b:** ability to discern inner qualities and relationships: INSIGHT
- c:** good sense: JUDGMENT
- d:** generally accepted belief
- 2:** a wise attitude, belief, or course of action
- 3:** the teachings of the ancient wise men⁶

These definitions all deal with knowing about life and knowing how to act. We might say that wisdom is simply the art of knowing how to live well. Yet, biblically speaking, we might say that wisdom is knowing how to live all of life with a right relationship to God and his creation, which includes other people and the world. I think that true wisdom is living in accordance with reality, and the ultimate reality is God. Being wise means knowing how to deal with different situations in ways that line up with how God designed and created life.

One of those situations is suffering. That is what the book of Job is about. But it's not just about suffering. Pain and loss have a way of causing us to think about the big questions of life. So, we want to think about how to handle pain and suffering wisely. But we should also want to think about how we can live our whole lives wisely. And, today, the book of Job turns to the question of wisdom.

Job is a man who has suffered greatly and he doesn't understand why. He has just talked again and again to three of his friends, who don't act very friendly toward him. Each friend assumes they know why Job is suffering, though, really, they are just speculating. They assume he is being punished for some sins he has committed. They even start to fabricate some charges against Job. But the fact remains that they really don't know why Job is suffering. We won't hear from those friends again. Now that their speculative words have finished, we find that Job, or at least the author, shows how unwise humans can be.

⁶ *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

We're going to look at chapter 28 today. A number of scholars assume that these are not Job's words.⁷ That is, they think chapter 28 is a poem that the author of the book wrote. That's possible. The original Hebrew didn't have quotation marks and all the formatting that we have in our modern Bibles, including chapter and verse numbers. These scholars think that these can't possibly be Job's words because they are so different from what Job says. Again, that's a real possibility. Nothing in that belief takes away from the truth of the Bible or our doctrine of Scripture. But it's also possible that Job, in a moment of clarity, reflected on the issue of wisdom. Either way, it's part of the Bible and I believe these words are more than speculation. Sometimes, Job is wrong, and his friends are wrong. (That doesn't mean the Bible is wrong; the Bible shows us when people lie or make up false doctrines.) But these words are true.

So, without further ado, let's read the first eleven verses of chapter 28.

- 1 "Surely there is a mine for silver,
and a place for gold that they refine.
- 2 Iron is taken out of the earth,
and copper is smelted from the ore.
- 3 Man puts an end to darkness
and searches out to the farthest limit
the ore in gloom and deep darkness.
- 4 He opens shafts in a valley away from where anyone lives;
they are forgotten by travelers;
they hang in the air, far away from mankind; they swing to and fro.
- 5 As for the earth, out of it comes bread,
but underneath it is turned up as by fire.
- 6 Its stones are the place of sapphires,
and it has dust of gold.
- 7 "That path no bird of prey knows,
and the falcon's eye has not seen it.
- 8 The proud beasts have not trodden it;
the lion has not passed over it.
- 9 "Man puts his hand to the flinty rock
and overturns mountains by the roots.
- 10 He cuts out channels in the rocks,
and his eye sees every precious thing.
- 11 He dams up the streams so that they do not trickle,

⁷ See, for example, John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 373. Often, this is simply assumed, as in Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 915. However, not all scholars see things this way. See Robert L. Alden, *Job*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 269.

and the thing that is hidden he brings out to light.⁸

The point here is rather simple. Humans are capable of doing amazing things. We can produce tremendous technologies that show a certain kind of mastery over the earth. Here, that technology is related to mining. People are able to dig shafts into the earth to pull out iron, precious stones, and gold. While that may not sound impressive, imagine doing that with no electricity, gas, or oil. I suppose the author could have mentioned the construction of temples or pyramids. It's amazing to think of how these large, impressive, ancient buildings were made without modern technology. People are clever. We are able to do impressive things. If Job were written today, perhaps the technology would relate to air travel or satellites or digital technology.

But despite the fact that people are clever, they have limits. We may be able to find precious metals and stones and oil and gas in the ground, we may be able to travel into space, but there is something that we can't find. And that is wisdom. Let's read verses 12–22:

- 12 “But where shall wisdom be found?
And where is the place of understanding?
13 Man does not know its worth,
and it is not found in the land of the living.
14 The deep says, ‘It is not in me,’
and the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’
15 It cannot be bought for gold,
and silver cannot be weighed as its price.
16 It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir,
in precious onyx or sapphire.
17 Gold and glass cannot equal it,
nor can it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold.
18 No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal;
the price of wisdom is above pearls.
19 The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it,
nor can it be valued in pure gold.

20 “From where, then, does wisdom come?
And where is the place of understanding?
21 It is hidden from the eyes of all living
and concealed from the birds of the air.
22 Abaddon and Death say,
‘We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.’

⁸ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

Where can wisdom be found? Can man mine it out of the earth like it was a jewel or gold? No. Wisdom is not something we can discover for ourselves. It's not in the sea or any other part of creation.

Can we buy wisdom? No. No amount of gold or jewels can purchase it. Wisdom is worth more than the finest gold and jewels. The living can't see it. Not even the dead know it. The best they can say is, "We have heard a rumor of it."

The problem isn't just that wisdom can't be discovered or purchased. The problem is that we don't know the worth of wisdom (v. 13). We know the worth of gold. We know the worth of diamonds. But we don't understand that wisdom is more important and more valuable than these things.

So, if we can't find wisdom, who can? Where is it? Are we destined to live as fools? Let's read on. We'll look at verses 23–27:

- ²³ "God understands the way to it,
and he knows its place.
²⁴ For he looks to the ends of the earth
and sees everything under the heavens.
²⁵ When he gave to the wind its weight
and apportioned the waters by measure,
²⁶ when he made a decree for the rain
and a way for the lightning of the thunder,
²⁷ then he saw it and declared it;
he established it, and searched it out.

God knows the way to wisdom because he knows where everything is. The God who made the universe, who controls the wind, the water, the rain, and the thunder, established wisdom. Sometimes wisdom is used in the Old Testament in terms of skill or craftsmanship. God, the ultimate builder and craftsman, created the universe with wisdom. And if we want to be wise, we need to go to God. In fact, until we start to have a right view of God, we cannot be wise. We see that in the last verse of the chapter, verse 28:

- ²⁸ And he said to man,
'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom,
and to turn away from evil is understanding.'

To fear the Lord is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding. That's the consistent message of the Bible. Consider Psalm 111:10:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
all those who practice it have a good understanding.
His praise endures forever!

And Proverbs 1:7:

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

And Proverbs 15:33:

The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom,
and humility comes before honor.⁹

What is the fear of the LORD? Does that mean we should be terrified of God? Not, necessarily. I do think we should have a healthy fear of God, knowing that he will hold everyone accountable for their sins. But the fear of God is also a respect for who he is. We're told that Job feared God (Job 1:1). Job knew that God was God and he was not. Job knew that God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Job knew that God is the Judge. Job knew that God is in control. We can't even be wise if we don't know this.

Remember that wisdom is the art of living well. It's about knowing ultimate reality and how to live in light of this knowledge. The ultimate reality is God. If we don't acknowledge that there is a God, and specifically the God who has revealed himself in the Bible, we will never be wise. To be wise, we must accept that God has created and defined reality. He has created us for certain purposes. He has made us man and woman (Gen. 1:27) and he has caused us to live in certain times and places (Acts 17:26). The fact is that we are finite creatures. That means that we have limits. God has created the universe in such a way that we have natural limits. We have spatial limits: We're not omnipresent; we can't be everywhere at once. We have cognitive limits: We don't know everything and we can't remember everything we have learned. We have biological limits: We have the genes we have. And God wants us to have moral limits. We're supposed to make certain moral choices and not others. Because he is the Creator, he knows how his Creation works best. That means when he commands us to do certain things, it's for our good. And when God prohibits other things, it's for our best interests.

But from the beginning, human beings have rebelled against these limitations. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit because they trusted the lies of the serpent, who told them that when

⁹ See also Prov. 9:10.

they ate the fruit, they would “be like God” (Gen. 3:5). They wanted to be wise (Gen. 3:6). But they didn’t realize that wisdom comes from God and that wisdom can only be acquired through trusting, or fearing, the Lord.

The classic passage on our problem of wisdom is Romans 1:18–23. I’ve quoted this at least once a year in my sermon because it’s such an important passage for understanding the human condition. Here it is again:

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Again, here is Paul’s logic: We all know that there is a God because we live in the world that he has made. So, we’re without excuse for our rebellion against God. Instead of worshiping God, the greatest and best Being, we worship lesser things. We exchange the truth that there is one God, worthy of all our love and worship, for a lie, which is that other things are worthy of our ultimate worship, desire, and allegiance. Paul’s language about “birds and animals and creeping things,” which may seem strange to us, recalls Genesis 1:26–28. We are supposed to rule over those the things of this world, not worship them.

But the key point that I want to highlight is this: “Claiming to be wise, they became fools.” By failing to live in light of God’s design for the world, we are fools. Our failure to worship God and live by his terms is like buying an iPhone and using it as a hammer. The device isn’t meant to be used that way, so why destroy by using it incorrectly? That’s what we do with God’s creation. We exist for God, and to pretend to exist for other reasons is just foolish. Not to live for God is like trying to fight against gravity. When we turn away from God, our thinking becomes futile and our hearts are darkened. Our desires become corrupt. We don’t think straight, we don’t desire rightly, and we don’t live wisely.

Of course, we don’t think we’re being foolish. And that’s part of the problem. So many people think they are wise by rejecting Christianity. Or, at least, they reject the Bible. They may want to retain some sense of faith, some sense of God, some sense of following Jesus, but they

don't think the Bible can be trusted as the true word of God. So, they deny what the Bible says rather clearly. And this is nothing new. This happened in the history of Israel. Consider just one example, from Jeremiah 8:8–9:

- ⁸ “How can you say, ‘We are wise,
and the law of the LORD is with us’?
But behold, the lying pen of the scribes
has made it into a lie.
⁹ The wise men shall be put to shame;
they shall be dismayed and taken;
behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD,
so what wisdom is in them?”

All I can say is that I never seen someone disprove the Bible's truthfulness. Sure, there are certain interpretations of the Bible that may be wrong. That happens. But when the Bible is interpreted rightly, we can see that it makes sense of our lives. It interprets us.¹⁰ It gives us answers to life's ultimate questions that we couldn't otherwise acquire.

Let's go back to the beginning of chapter 28. Job (or the author) acknowledges that humans can mine gold but they can't mine wisdom. We can mine gold, but that doesn't mean we know what gold should be used for.

The ultimate questions like “What is the purpose of life?” “Who are we?” “Is there a God and what is God like?” “What is the meaning of history?” “Where is history going?” “What happens when we die?” “What will fix this broken world?” are ones that we cannot answer with certainty. We need those things revealed to us.

That's not to take away from science or other human endeavors. Christians should be scientists and should work hard to discover the order of God's creation. Historically, many scientists were Christians. In fact, the Christian worldview encourages science because Christianity teaches that God is a God of order, and that he has made a world that reflects that order. We trust that the laws of nature we observe today will remain the same tomorrow. That assumption is one of the bases of the scientific method. But science can't teach us meaning. Science doesn't tell us what is morally right and wrong. Scientists were able to harness the power of the atom, and that can be used for good things like providing nuclear energy. But that same power can be used destructively, to kill millions of people with the drop of one bomb. And

¹⁰ “[C]orrect interpretation requires that we must submit ourselves to the Bible's interpretation of us.” Matthew Barrett, *God's Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 61.

even when we try to use that technology well, we can still end up with the Chernobyl (1986) and Fukushima Daichii (2011) nuclear disasters.

We can think of other examples. Discovering the human genome is a wonderful thing, and being able to correct genetic defects in people is a good thing in the event of life-threatening diseases. But where do we draw the lines? Are genetically-modified organisms safe to eat? Do we tinker with the genes of the unborn? Prenatal genetic screening comes with a dark edge, as most children with Down syndrome are aborted.¹¹ Apparently, all unborn babies in Iceland who have Down syndrome are aborted. Yes, 100 percent are killed.¹² Is that humane? Is that wise?

Or think of smart phones. We can do amazing things with these pocket computers. They can be used for communication, commerce, finding directions, performing research, studying the Bible, listening to podcasts (including our church's sermons), watching movies, and many other things. Some of that is clearly good. Science and technology have made that possible. But science and technology can't tell us what we should use smart phones for. Smart phones can be used to watch pornography or kill someone (or get killed) while texting and driving. A number of people have even killed themselves while taking selfies.¹³ And we become addicted to our phones, which then become our idols. Do we own them, or do they own us? Again, where shall wisdom be found?

No amount of fame or money can buy wisdom. Speaking of phones, Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple, and the one who ushered in the iPhone, was one of the world's richest and most respected people when he died of cancer in 2011. At the time of his death, he was worth somewhere between 10 and 11 billion dollars. He could have had more money if he had retained more shares of Apple stock.¹⁴ Most people would think that he was a very successful, very intelligent, and perhaps even very wise person. But what if he was a fool?

At the end of his life, Jobs said,

¹¹ Tim Stanley, "Down's Syndrome People Risk 'Extinction' at the Hands of Science, Fear and Ignorance," *The Telegraph*, January 18, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/03/22/downs-syndrome-people-risk-extinction-at-the-hands-of-science-fe>, accessed March 18, 2017.

¹² Lauren Bell, "In Iceland 100% of Babies Diagnosed with Down Syndrome Are Aborted. Think About That." *LifeSite News*, March 14, 2017, <https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/babies-with-down-syndrome-deserve-love-not-eradication>, accessed March 18, 2017.

¹³ John Patrick Pullen, "Six Times People Died While Taking Selfies," *Time.com*, March 14, 2016, <http://time.com/4257429/selfie-deaths>, accessed March 18, 2017.

¹⁴ John Maxfield, "Here's Why Bill Gates Was So Much Richer Than Steve Jobs," *The Motley Fool*, February 19, 2014, <https://www.fool.com/investing/general/2014/02/19/heres-why-bill-gates-was-so-much-richer-than-steve.aspx>, accessed March 18, 2017.

I'm about fifty-fifty on believing in God. . . . For most of my life, I've felt that there must be more to our existence than meets the eye. . . . I like to think that something survives after you die. . . . It's strange to think that you accumulate all this experience, and maybe a little wisdom, and it just goes away. So I really want to believe that something survives, that maybe your consciousness endures. . . . But on the other hand, perhaps it's like an on-off switch. . . . *Click!* And you're gone.¹⁵

Jobs was apparently drawn to Buddhism. Though it's possible he had some kind of death-bed conversion, we don't have any proof of that. For all we know, he died rich and he died a fool. He didn't realize that the chief end of man, according to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, "is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever." Bill Gates, another legend in the world of computers, may be the world's richest man, at a net worth of \$85.9 billion, but if he doesn't put his trust in Jesus, that money won't help him.

I don't mean to pick on a few people. The fact is that we're all foolish. We are not wise in ourselves. We can't arrive at ultimate truths by guessing or even by the most sophisticated philosophy. (By the way, philosophy means "love of wisdom.") The reason is that many truths cannot be arrived at with certainty. Because we are finite creatures, we have limited perspectives. We don't have a God's-eye view of the truth. That is why we need God to reveal himself to us. Consider Proverbs 30:1–6:

¹ The words of Agur son of Jakeh. The oracle.

- The man declares, I am weary, O God;
I am weary, O God, and worn out.
- ² Surely I am too stupid to be a man.
I have not the understanding of a man.
- ³ I have not learned wisdom,
nor have I knowledge of the Holy One.
- ⁴ Who has ascended to heaven and come down?
Who has gathered the wind in his fists?
Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment?
Who has established all the ends of the earth?
What is his name, and what is his son's name?
Surely you know!
- ⁵ Every word of God proves true;
he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.
- ⁶ Do not add to his words,
lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.

¹⁵ Walter Isaacson, *Steve Jobs* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 571.

God has spoken to us through prophets and apostles. And, most importantly, God has spoken to us through his Son, Jesus. Jesus is the one who has “ascended to heaven and come down.” He has revealed to us true wisdom. Without God speaking to us, we wouldn’t know much about him and the ultimate questions of life. We could know that there is a God through reasoning, but we wouldn’t know much about what he is like. We wouldn’t know that he is a Trinity: one Being in three Persons. We wouldn’t know that God became man and died for our sins. We wouldn’t know what he demands of us. But God has revealed himself to us.

We need someone to teach us wisdom. That is what Jesus has done. Jesus is the ultimate wise man. Many of his teachings are similar to the Proverbs, which, along with Job, Ecclesiastes, and a number of Psalms, form the wisdom literature of the Bible.¹⁶ Jesus teaches us what the good life is really about. He teaches us the purpose of life, what God is really like, and how to have a relationship with God. He teaches us what happens after death, how to love God and other people, and so much more. James says that “the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere” (James 3:17). This is the wisdom of Jesus, a gift from God.

And not only that, but since we’re fools, we have a problem. We need to be regarded wise in God’s eyes if we are going to be acceptable to him. We have to be regarded as righteous. But we’re not. Yet Jesus, the ultimate wise man, lived a perfectly wise and righteous life. He lived according to God’s design for human beings. He related perfectly to God, other people, and God’s creation. We do not. We bring chaos, but Jesus restores order. And because Jesus is wise and we’re not, we’re going to need his wisdom credited to our account if we’re going to be wise in God’s eyes.

Fortunately, for those who trust in Jesus, he is our righteousness. He is our wisdom. That is exactly what the apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:18–31. In that passage, Paul says that God’s wisdom and the world’s wisdom are opposed. It’s easy to misread this passage and think that the way of God is foolish. The way of God is always wise. But in the eyes of the unbelieving world, it *appears* foolish. Yet God confounds those who think they are wise by demonstrating true wisdom in Jesus. Let’s read this passage.

¹⁶ See Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Wisdom*, in *The Goldsworthy Trilogy* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2000), 500–509.

¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart” [Isa. 29:14].

²⁰ 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? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

Foolishness is thinking that we can outsmart God.¹⁷ But the truth is we can't do that. And God's ways are not our ways. We think we can figure out a way to save ourselves. The ancient Greeks thought they could achieve salvation through man-made philosophy, as opposed to God's revealed wisdom. Jews expected that God would deliver them through great acts of power, crushing the Roman Empire. But God, in his wisdom, didn't send an academic or a warrior. God sent his Son. Now, Jesus is smarter and wiser than Plato, Aristotle, or any Greek philosopher. And Jesus is more powerful than all the world's armies combined. Yet Jesus came in humility and weakness. He spoke what the Father wanted him to speak. And instead of crushing the Roman Empire with a display of brute force, he was killed. He was stripped off his clothes and nailed to a cross like a poor, shamed criminal. And this was both the result of human sin and also God's plan to save us.

¹⁷ “In our desperate folly we act as if we can outsmart God, as if he owes us explanations, as if we are wise and self-determining while he exists only to meet our needs.” D. A. Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry: Leadership Lessons from 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 15.

The irony is that this is true wisdom and true power. I want to quote Tim Keller, who puts it better than I can:

You want wisdom, says Paul to Greek listeners, but look at the cross. Didn't it make it possible for God to be both just *and* justifier of those who believe? Isn't this the ultimate wisdom? You want power, says Paul to his Jewish listeners, but look at the cross. Doesn't it make it possible for God to defeat our most powerful enemies—sin, guilt, and death itself—without destroying us? Isn't this the ultimate strength?¹⁸

God's ways are not our ways. They are better than our ways. If only we would humble ourselves and receive them, we would be wise.

One of the main reasons we don't want to receive God's wisdom is pride. We think we can figure things out for ourselves. We think we know better than God. But this is foolishness. How can a mere mortal know better than God? We can't figure out so many simple things in life, let alone the problem of death. How dare we think that we can outsmart God?

So, let us be wise. Let us receive the wisdom of God. This doesn't mean that we turn off our brains. I want to be clear about that. Christians should be intellectual. We should grow in our learning and our ability to think. But we must think within the narrative of the world that God has given us. We must always think about everything in light of God's revelation. We must accept our limits as creatures and turn to the Creator. Christians should be great scientists, writers, and artists. We should use all our mind to love God (Matt. 22:37). Anti-intellectualism is a sin. Unfortunately, that sin runs deep in certain strands of Christianity. I would like to see this church become more of a thinking church, as well as a feeling and doing church. But you don't need to first be smart and educated to come to faith in Jesus. You don't have to be wise on your own to be wise in God's eyes. And that is good news.

Being wise means living life according to God's design. It means doing things God's way. It means paying attention to his words and doing what he says. It means thinking about all of life in light of all of God's word. Being wise means handling our marriages, our money, our time and everything else we have according to God's design.

Jesus once said that the wise man will build his life on the foundation of his words, while the foolish man will build his life on the shifting sands of man-made wisdom (Matt. 7:24–27). The question for us is, which person will we be?

¹⁸ Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Dutton, 2015), 19.