

## LIFE MATTERS – What Matters Most – “Wisdom and Knowledge”

In **2 Chronicles 1:11-12** God says to Solomon, **“Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked for riches or wealth, or honour or the life of your enemies, nor have you asked for long life – but you have asked for wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may judge My people over whom I have made you king – wisdom and knowledge are granted to you; and I will give you riches and wealth and honour.”** Notice, riches and wealth and honour didn’t just fall out of the sky! Solomon had acquired wisdom and knowledge from God, and thereafter, the shrewd application of what he had gained caused him to be very successful and receive great honour. Through Jesus Christ, all believers have access to the very same source of divine wisdom. **James 1:5** states, **“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach; and it will be given to him.”**

Please understand wisdom wasn’t all that Solomon had asked for he also asked for (and obtained) “knowledge.” And what I find very interesting is that the ancient Hebrew word for *knowledge* is derived from a verb which means “to know through experience with the senses.” It implies “experiential or first-hand knowledge!” Therefore, Solomon was not asking God for information alone but rather for information that leads to knowledge, and this required *experience*.

Concerning experience, C.S. Lewis said this, *“What I like about experience is that it is such an honest thing... You may have deceived yourself, but experience is not trying to deceive you.”* Experience allows you to see things as they are!

I am convinced that it is only after you have gained enough information, through *experience*, that you can acquire true *knowledge*. Likewise, it’s only after you have built sufficient *character* through experiential knowledge that you can operate in *wisdom*. That’s why Solomon asked for both wisdom and knowledge. Yet, we must learn to differentiate between them.

In a sense, knowledge shrinks as wisdom grows. And details (or organised data) become swallowed up in principles. Hence, the active and effective utilisation of well understood principles is the final possession of wisdom. Like Solomon, if you truly understand that success, happiness and life balance come from living in harmony with timeless principles, and then you too can seek to discover the wisdom of the ages. And when you’ve found it, you can apply it to the challenges of today.

By consciously making a decision to seek after and live by wisdom you place yourself on the path to success and honour. It also gives you the openness that only comes with being a seeker of wisdom and truth an openness (a teachable spirit) that God will use to His glory.

Back to the process I mentioned earlier... Only experience can lead to true knowledge. And it’s the same in your relationship with God. You can never have true knowledge of God unless you have first experienced God. The experiential knowledge of God gives you understanding, and *understanding* grows with each fresh experience. **Proverbs 9:10** declares that **“knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”** **Proverbs 2:2** says that you must **“apply your heart to understanding.”**

Profound knowledge is literally what the Bible is. In fact, it is *profound wisdom* because it interweaves timeless, self evident, universal principles into all knowledge that it brings forth.

However, to truly benefit from God’s word (the Bible), you must *experience* it. **Hebrews 4:12** says, **“For the word of God is living and powerful...”** Another translation says, **“...Alive and active.”** Therefore, the

Bible is not mere information or organised data; it is a *living entity* that can be intimately “known” experienced.

Off course, you don't have to experience everything in life to know what paths to avoid. You have a conscience and common sense to draw on. But it is experience good or bad that gives you the knowledge to make good choices. It might be your experience with the grief of a difficult relationship or the joy of a strong one that causes you to value relationships. Or, it may be your experience with the anguish of bad debt or the satisfaction of accruing interest that causes you to value financial advice. But in each case, its experience that helps you to know what is best for you and which path to take. This is called *navigational intelligence* – wisdom!

Francis Hutcheson, a Scottish philosopher said this, “*Wisdom denotes the pursuing of the best ends by the best means.*” Top author Roger Merrill wrote, “*The more you learn to value principles, evaluate experience and invite inspiration, the stronger your navigational intelligence or “wisdom” will be.*”

So how do you gain the most from experience? Well, you need to process your experiences correctly. You need to ponder over them, reflect on them, and gain insight and understanding from your encounters with the affairs of everyday life good or bad. Your ability to evaluate and learn from your experiences is one of the best ways to move toward knowledge and understanding, and in turn, acquire *wisdom*. **Proverbs 4:7** says, “***Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom, and in your getting, get understanding.***”

In the act of acquiring wisdom you must gain understanding. And true understanding is only gained after you have processed and evaluated your experiences correctly. There are two things you can do that will help you in this area:

[1] Learn from the experiences of others. In addition to learning from your own experiences, you can choose to learn from the experiences of others. So remain humble and be teachable! **Proverbs 1:5** states, “***A wise man will hear and will increase in his learning.***” An un-teachable spirit is an unwillingness to change. Choose to learn from other people's mistakes so that you can change for the better. Aristotle said, “*A wise man learns from a fool, but a fool can't learn from a wise man.*” You can learn from any person who is willing to share his/her experiences openly. This way, you are invited into the hearts and minds of others, so the learning goes well beyond behaviour and into motive and profound meaning. One of the great benefits of rich relationships is shared learning.

[2] Share your experiences with others. This leads us to another wisdom path; *sharing what you have learned with others*. However, as you consider this path, I suggest you try the following experiment:

Stop for a minute and think about one person who has significantly influenced your life. Who is this person? What is it that enabled that person to influence you in such a powerful way? If your experiences are like mine, you've probably identified someone: (a) *Who has strength of character.* (b) *With whom you've had some personal connection.* (c) *Who had valuable wisdom to share.* But whoever it is, this person made a difference in your life because of his/her personal example and willingness to share. You must realise that your example and willingness to share can profoundly influence others too!

By sharing in this way, you align your life with the principle of contribution. And your contribution toward others determines God's contribution toward you! In addition, you open meaningful dialogue that creates a bridge between your own experiences and the experiences of others. Then, as you interact, going back and

forth across the bridge, you create a larger shared vision. Understanding for both parties is increased. And you become wiser together; wiser than you could ever have become alone. This is a God connection between two people.

But whatever path you take to finding wisdom, you must always “invite inspiration.” And the best *inspiration* you can invite is the inspiration of the Spirit of God. However, this requires humility, as you must be completely open to guidance from above. That “still small voice” within you is the best way to access the wisdom of God; a wisdom which is far more powerful and beyond your own. And all you have to do is ask in faith! **James 1:5-6** states, ***“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach; and it will be given to him; but let him ask in faith, with no doubting...”***

Earlier I mentioned that the link between information and knowledge is *experience*. And the link between knowledge and wisdom is *character*. Yet it's not only “knowing” the principles that bring positive results, or even knowing “how” to do them; it's also “doing” them *doing them for the right reasons, at the right time, and in the right way*. This is called insight. And insight, like wisdom, lets you see the way things really are.

Too many people get hooked on “knowing.” Most of you probably “know” more than you need to know in almost every area of your life. So what's the solution? It's character! It's the ability to be true to the best values God's placed within you.

And how do you develop character? You seek it? You grow it? You exercise it in the decisions you make every day. Character is forged in the crucible of daily living. And it's mastered in the University of Hard Knocks. Character is never imparted, it's earned. Character is what ensures that all the knowledge you've acquired through experience becomes wisdom.

This is why living with awareness and processing your own experiences is so vital. You can learn about principles. You can read about the experiences of others. But the place you really develop navigational intelligence (wisdom) is on the sea of life. That's where your learning becomes firsthand. That's where experiential learning properly processed becomes wisdom founded and grounded on character.

It is as you boldly confront the challenges of daily living, with poignant awareness, that you learn to set your compass and chart your course based on “the truth” based on God's perfect plan and purpose for your life. The truth will always lead you to the abundant life Jesus has promised.

What matters? Life Matters because each day of your life is an unknown, unwritten page. But if you value good principles, learn from your experiences, and invite the inspiration of the Holy Spirit into each day and then keep trying no matter what you will acquire and exercise sufficient wisdom to live joyfully and successfully.

Your life matters because it is YOUR life! And you only have one life here on earth, so be wise, make the most of it!