



# Managing GOD's Money

Theme for January: Wisdom

*Each of us needs to apply wisdom — insight, good judgment under God's direction — to life daily to do right in God's eyes. So often we apply the best logic and common sense to our circumstances but the results turn out different from our expectations. Sometimes they surprise us; they even seem illogical! How does this happen in this sophisticated technology age when computers can model and "predict" results? Surely, we should expect greater predictability for daily routine events, especially those with which we are familiar, such as financial matters. Shouldn't we?*

*As we start a New Year, let's look at wisdom from God's perspective — its source and uses — by focusing on these key topics throughout the month:*

- January 1-7: *Fear and Humility: The beginning of wisdom*
- January 8-14: *Our daily walk: Mimicking God's wisdom in all relationships*
- January 15-21: *Wealth: Applying godly wisdom as stewards of God's possessions*
- January 22-31: *Foolishness: Becoming foolish to gain wisdom*

Topic for Month: Fear and Humility, the beginning of wisdom

January 1-7

## The Word



### 1 Kings 3:12-14

**I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for —both riches and honor— so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life."**

Here is the backdrop to these verses. In a dream, God invites Solomon who had replaced his father, David, as King of Israel, to ask Him for whatever he wants. Solomon responds:

**7...I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. <sup>9</sup>So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?" (1 Kings 3:7-9)**

Solomon's first response to God's question showed the humility Jesus emphasized to His disciples in **Mark 10:15**, which says "I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Solomon acknowledged his need for and dependence on God. He understood that in our own strength not one of us can perform well in any relationship, much less govern God's children.

Before he got the precious gift of wisdom from God, Solomon appreciated his vast responsibilities — a young king succeeding a powerful leader, his father David, a man after God's own heart. For many of us, how difficult it is to go like a child to Jesus, accept our inadequacies, and ask for and follow His direction. Even

so, busyness overwhelms many folks so they don't hear Jesus' voice asking them to tell Him what they need. When was the last time you allowed time to listen for Jesus' voice?

In time, God delivered on His promise to Solomon. Shortly after gaining the gift of wisdom, Solomon applied it to settle a dispute between two women (**1 Kings 3:16-27**). All Israel heard about it, were in awe of, and accepted Solomon's rule — they correctly linked Solomon's wisdom to godliness.

For a time, Solomon ruled as a godly man applying godly wisdom. He was the wisest, wealthiest man who lived:

<sup>23</sup> King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. <sup>24</sup> The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart (**1 Kings 10:23-24**).

What were the keys to this wisdom from God? Solomon's dad, King David, tells us in the words he penned in **Psalms 111:10**:

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.”

Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 15:16**:

“Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great wealth with turmoil.”

This fear of God – awe or reverence for God – is a mind-set that comes from thirsting after God as the Psalmist portrays in **Psalm 42:1-2**: “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.” It comes from understanding as the deer’s life depends on water, believers ought to depend on Jesus who died for us. Believers should never forget we have victory—eternal life with Jesus. Like most gifts, wisdom not applied under God’s direction will be ineffective in God’s Kingdom.

Solomon, like us, lived in a fallen world where people and events distracted him from seeking God. So like many today, Solomon strayed from the godly path as his success rose. Gradually various idols pulled him away from God so he stopped applying godly wisdom. No longer did he show the humility and fear of God he showed during his early reign, but acted in his own strength, disobeying God repeatedly.

Absorbed by power and prestige, Solomon descended into a life of debauchery (**1 Kings 11**). Unlike His father, David, who sought after God constantly, Solomon’s love for the wives he collected as he expanded his kingdom turned him against God. Indeed, shortly before he asked God for wisdom, he disobeyed Him by marrying a foreign wife. (**1 Kings 3:1, Deuteronomy 7:1-4-Nehemiah 13:26**). Wealth, fame, and power distracted Solomon. He forgot his source of wisdom, so he applied

worldly wisdom to gain pleasure and possessions – he did not recall his first request to God. How similar to you and me today. Slowly, unintentionally, we drift away from God – the *Slow Burn Principle* sets in – and unwittingly we amass idols of wealth, power, and prestige. What is your source of strength and wisdom today?

But God is gracious, kind, and merciful. He does not abandon us. When Solomon’s life was in turmoil, God spoke to him about his misdeeds. Sadly, Solomon disobeyed. So God removed him from the throne (**1 Kings 11:9-43**). Solomon, though wise, had become me-centered, stopped depending on God, and stopped applying godly wisdom.

Writing in his later years in **Ecclesiastes 2:26**, Solomon referred to life as a chasing after the wind, effectively recognizing living apart from God as futile. Yes folks, whatever your condition in life, knowing God through His Son Messiah Jesus is the single most important purpose in life. Heed Solomon’s final words in **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14** that show, in the end, he understood the need to fear God – holding God in reverence and awe:

<sup>13</sup> Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man. <sup>14</sup> For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

To be sure, the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, which when applied under God’s direction, leads to outcomes acceptable to God, unlike human wisdom that leads to ruin. In **Galatians 5:17**, Apostle Paul describes the internal battle believers fight daily between the Holy Spirit and our sinful nature. The Holy Spirit is our guide; He is the “stronger force.” Often we rely on

our own wisdom, choose poorly, and must deal with sin’s effects. Only through the Holy Spirit’s power can we apply godly wisdom to avoid poor choices (**Romans 8:1-8; Colossians 3:1-4**).

## Application



**Proverbs 28:11**

**A rich man may be wise in his own eyes, but a poor man who has discernment sees through him.**

Applying godly wisdom needs a heart and mind surrendered to and thirsting after Jesus. It’s the heart and mind of someone prepared to serve Jesus unreservedly. It’s somebody who wants to love the Lord with all his heart, mind, and soul, and to obey all His commands (**John 14:15**). He or she yearns to listen for, and respond to God’s call to carry out specific assignments the best he or she can, confident God wants the best for him or her always. As well, he or she knows God will provide everything needed to carry out each assignment – time, talent, money, and other resources.

If you don’t have a personal relationship with Messiah Jesus (**John 3:1-21**), rise above daily distractions and worldly enticements, listen for His voice, answer His call, and surrender your life to Him today. After this, God’s Holy Spirit will come to live in you to be your teacher and guide.

Take Apostle James' advice and ask Jesus for wisdom and insight:

<sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. <sup>6</sup> But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind (**James 1:5-6**).

But remember these two matters:

First, a forerunner to godly wisdom is humility: admit your need for and dependency on Messiah Jesus (**Luke 10:21**).

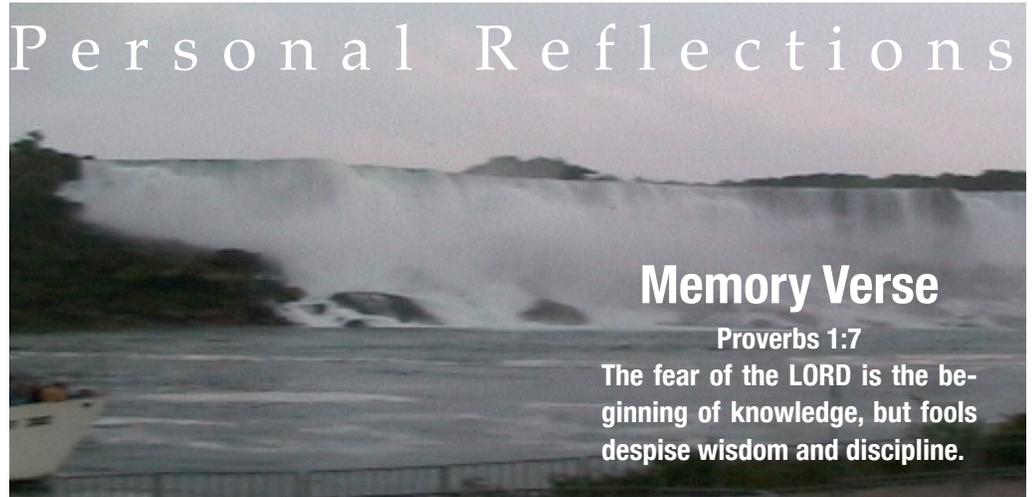
Second, as we saw in **Psalm 111:10**, godly wisdom starts with reverential awe and admiration of God—fear of God. Stay close to Messiah Jesus as you get and apply His wisdom consistently.

This week, consider these three questions:

1. **Regularly, do you invest time to listen to Jesus' voice?** Solomon was an ordinary person to whom God spoke. Today, Jesus might have a special word for you to enable you to do the extra ordinary!. Are you "too busy" to hear?
2. **Do you practice the reverence and awe of Jesus He deserves?** Have you become casual in your worship?
3. **Have you been applying His wisdom to events at home, church, and elsewhere?** if you haven't, why not start today?

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# Personal Reflections



## Memory Verse

Proverbs 1:7

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

January 1<sup>st</sup> Romans 8:1-4; Colossians 3:1-4

January 2<sup>nd</sup>: 1 Kings 3:1; Nehemiah 13:26; Deuteronomy 7:1-4

January 3<sup>rd</sup>: Mark 10:15; Luke 10:21; 1 Kings 3:7-9; 1 Kings 3:12-27

January 4<sup>th</sup>: 1 Kings 10:23-24, Psalm 111:10, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

January 5<sup>th</sup>: Proverbs 15:16, Psalm 42:1-2

January 6<sup>th</sup>: 1 Kings 11

January 7<sup>th</sup>: James 1:5-6, Proverbs 1:7; John 14:15