If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

— James 1:5

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Many Faces of Wisdom

A friend listened as I explained my poor decision. I talked about some of the dynamics between the people involved (whom he didn’t know himself), which he would hold in confidence. These were aspects that I recognized after the whole thing sort of blew up. By the end of the story, my words and expressions conveyed my frustration over all that I could have avoided by applying some wisdom.

There was a two- or three-second pause after I stopped talking before my friend said, “I’m sorry that happened. I understand how it could. I’ve done similar.”

He didn’t lecture, judge, or reject. He didn’t try to fix anything, or excuse me for messing up, or try to tell me that I didn’t make a bad decision when I knew I had. My friend listened, cared, and also offered an invitation to wisdom—“I’ve done similar.”

After thanking him for listening and understanding, I followed up on his invitation, asking for his wisdom. That afternoon I learned more of my friend’s story and gained wisdom. I wish I would have asked him for advice on my situation before I jumped into my fateful action. He would have given, and helped me avoid a mistake.

Wisdom is not a bunch of knowledge and information we acquire and hold, but rather it is insight and good sense we use for living well. We don’t necessarily gain wisdom by simply reading a book, such as the book of Proverbs, though that is certainly a good way to start. Wisdom comes through experiences. There are two sources. The first is our own experiences and the second is wisdom that comes through the experiences of others.

Gaining wisdom through our own experience is good. This is what ordinary people do. The problem is that the amount of wisdom gained is limited to our own hard knocks.
Gaining wisdom through the experiences of others is better. This is what wise people do, and especially before they need it. This way is also hard, but in a different way. We have to admit to ourselves, and also to someone else who can help us, that we are in over our heads and we don’t know what we are doing. It also means we must learn to ask questions and seek help. All this comes out of humility.

James 1:5 tells us about the better way to gain wisdom and whom to ask for it: “. . . you should ask God . . . .”

There is no better source for wisdom than God. He offers wisdom through every story, law, psalm, proverb, prophecy, and instruction in Scripture. All these offer wisdom through the context of the experience of real people and how God is working in their lives. We have much wisdom to gain from their experiences.

God has given His invitation to come and gain wisdom. He is ready to listen to our prayer for help and respond in love with insight and wisdom for our lives. It is our turn to seek Him and ask.

The daily devotionals in this guide offer wisdom. They are rooted in Scripture and take us into the Bible. Each day begins with a story—experiences of people to lead us into truths and insights the authors serve to us from Scripture. Think of each devotional as a daily dose of wisdom with encouragement to be wise.

May you grow in wisdom as you delve into God’s Word, absorb the experiences of other people, and invest time to be with God—who generously gives wisdom to all who seek Him.

Scott Stewart, Editor
Peace Furthers Gospel Preaching

The word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly (Acts 6:7).

Scripture: Acts 6:1-7
Song: “I Love to Tell the Story”

New Park Street Chapel in London had long supported the preaching of God’s Word, including that of George Whitefield in the Great Awakening. But conflict erupted in 1771, when they called 20-year-old John Rippon as minister. Some, thinking he was too young, left to start another church. Instead of allowing the conflict to deepen, though, Rippon wisely encouraged his congregation to help pay for the breakaway group’s building, and he took part in their minister’s consecration. In consequence, both churches continued preaching the gospel, and Rippon’s church experienced revival. In 1853 Park Street called another young man, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, renowned for his powerful preaching of God’s Word.

Conflict arose in the early church in Jerusalem, which could have ended the church’s witness. But the apostles encouraged the church to choose wise and godly men to oversee the food distribution, and the problem was resolved. Because of that, the apostles could continue preaching, and the church grew rapidly.

Disagreements occur in the closest-knit groups, and feelings of anger and betrayal are hard to forgive. But God encourages us to seek wisdom in His Word and, with love and patience, make a way for peace.

Father, help us show forgiveness and Christ’s love amid conflict, so Your Word can spread to the world. In Jesus’ name, amen.
Courage to Take Off

The Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7).

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:3-9a
Song: “My Faith Looks Up to Thee”

I rejoiced when our first grandchild was born, but I also felt anxious about flying to see her. My anxiety always increased in the weeks before a flight and rose higher as the plane took off. Then I worried about the flight home. I just wanted to move closer to my grandchild, but God had a better plan. I received a call from my great-aunt, who, at 90, didn’t beat around the bush. She encouraged me to find a fear-of-flying class. I listened to her wisdom and enrolled in a class that took us into the control tower and onto planes to listen to pilots and other experts. We also learned ways to manage anxiety.

Most scholars think that 2 Timothy was Paul’s last letter before he was executed. Paul was, therefore, especially concerned that Timothy would courageously continue preaching the gospel and teaching the importance of holy living, as he depended on God.

On the day of our graduation flight, we had a big snowstorm. Watching the crew de-icing the plane, my courage melted too. Then I remembered I could depend on God’s power to calm and discipline my heart so I could put into practice what I had been taught. God promises to give each of us power to take off beyond our fears.

Father, many things in life make us anxious. Help us rely on Your power to overcome our fears, so we can serve You with love and self-discipline. In Jesus’ name, amen.
June 3

God Hears Us

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit (Psalm 34:18).

Scripture: Psalm 34:11-18
Song: “He Leadeth Me”

Great things were predicted for Ajayi, who was born around 1809 in what is today Nigeria. When Ajayi was 12, however, slave traders captured him. The boy was eventually sold to slave traders for transportation to Brazil. Shuffling in chains into the dark hold, Ajayi must have wondered how he’d ever fulfill those predictions. Then a British officer, enforcing Britain’s ban on the slave trade, boarded his ship and freed the captives. They released them in Sierra Leone, where abolitionists ran a settlement for rescued slaves. There Ajayi became a Christian and attended school. Later in Britain, Ajayi became a minister and took the name Samuel Ajayi Crowther. Returning to western Africa, Ajayi evangelized his people and translated the Bible into their language.

David was anointed as Israel’s next king, but today’s psalm finds him on the run from Saul. When David could find no refuge, even with Saul’s enemies, he must have wondered how he’d ever become king. The psalm tells of his crushed spirit, but also of his trust that God heard his cries and would deliver him to become king.

Both these men went through terrible experiences, but as God helped them grow in faith and trust, they followed God’s way to accomplish great things for Him. What amazing examples for us to follow!

Father, when we go through heartbreaking experiences, help us bring our fears to You and trustingly follow Your loving and wise plans, even in the darkest times. In Jesus’ name, amen.
A Battle That Needed No Swords

One of Jesus’ companions reached for his sword. . . . “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him (Matthew 26:51, 52).

Scripture: Matthew 26:47-52
Song: “The Power of the Cross”

Sometimes a kingdom’s destiny rests on the outcome of one battle. The Battle of Hastings in 1066 was one of those, and the Bayeux Tapestry chronicles it all. Two hundred feet of bright embroidery depicts broken oaths and battle preparations. In the battle scenes, knights charge into hails of spears and arrows, which tumbled horses and riders to their deaths. Swords flash out as the fighting turns to hand-to-hand combat, and more soldiers die. In the end Duke William of Normandy won England’s golden crown.

When Peter drew his sword to prevent Jesus’ arrest, he was following the world’s way of gaining a crown. Jesus told Peter to put the sword away, because that was not God’s way. No earthly battles with swords could win this war.

Instead Jesus knew He had to follow God’s plan and allow His arrest there in the Garden of Gethsemane so He could fight the most important battle of all time. And He had to fight this battle not by sending soldiers to die for Him, but by accepting a crown of thorns and giving His own life to defeat Satan and death once and for all.

Father, thank You that Christ was willing to wear a cruel crown of thorns and die a terrible death to win the war against Satan and secure a place for us in Your kingdom forever. In Jesus’ name, amen.
June 5

**Wondrous Microscopic Creatures**

God gave Solomon wisdom. . . . He spoke about plant life. . . . He also spoke about animals and birds, reptiles and fish (1 Kings 4:29, 33).

**Scripture:** 1 Kings 4:29-34  
**Song:** “For the Beauty of the Earth”

A busy Dutch cloth merchant, not a scientist, is the “father of microbiology.” Antony van Leewenhoek lived in Delft in the 1600s and ground lenses as a hobby. He studied water and many other things with his microscopes and was the first to observe bacteria and protozoa. A devout Christian, he wrote about his wonder at the wisdom of God in creating such perfection even in microscopic creatures. He published his findings, including the first accurate description of red blood cells, through the Royal Society of London. Even kings visited this merchant turned scientist.

Solomon was a great king, ruling over the kingdom that God had helped his father, David, win. God gave Solomon great wisdom, and under him Israel had peace and economic growth. Solomon used the wisdom God gave him not only to rule wisely but also to study and teach about God’s world—plants (from the mighty cedar to the lowly hyssop) and all kinds of animals. People came from distant lands to learn from him.

We’re also busy, but taking time to appreciate the small wonders of creation can strengthen our faith in God’s goodness, wisdom, and care for all of His creation, including us. It can also refresh us to meet the everyday stresses of life.

**Father,** help us appreciate the wonders of Your creation and how everything from the smallest protozoa to the largest whales all point to Your wisdom and care. In Jesus’ name, amen.
June 6

Pursue God’s Wisdom

Listen, my sons, to a father’s instruction; pay attention and gain understanding (Proverbs 4:1).

Scripture: Proverbs 4:1-9
Song: “Be Thou My Vision”

One of the first things I did every school year was to teach my class what to do if we had a fire. When the alarm sounded, they had to stop everything and line up. They also learned to push in their chairs and to walk, not run. Hardest of all, they had to be quiet. We always made time for questions to help them trust the wisdom of these rules. In between their stories about visiting a fire station or setting off the smoke alarm at home, children would question the why of each rule. I explained carefully so they would understand and follow the rules to find safety.

In today’s proverb, God is speaking to us, His children, with even more urgency about the importance of pursuing His wisdom. God is the source of all wisdom, and He urges us to seek Him in the Bible. God’s inspired Word teaches us about Him and His love and how we may love and serve Him.

I encouraged my students to listen to my instructions about fires because it was important for their safety. How much more important it is to seek the treasures to be found in God’s Word and there find Jesus, who gives us eternal safety through His death and resurrection.

Father, thank You for Your Word. Help us humbly read and accept Your teaching so we may gain wisdom and understanding that will lead us to faith in Christ. In Jesus’ name, amen.