

»mon

In Proverbs 1:7, “fear” doesn’t mean fright. It means being in awe of who God is and what He is capable of doing. Write down one way God has demonstrated His power in your life sometime in the past week. Praise God for His ability to do anything.

»tues

Learning without any respect for God only results in academic arrogance. When He is ignored, people begin to believe what is false. Praise God today for being the source of all that is true.

»wed

Read Proverbs 13:16. Everyone behaves foolishly sometimes. What

was the last foolish thing you did? What were the consequences? Ask God to help you learn from foolish decisions so that you don’t repeat them.

»thurs

It often takes courage to act wisely and to do the right thing. What’s the most difficult “right” thing you ever did? Ask God for the same courage when you face those kinds of choices in the future.

»fri

Read Proverbs 10:17. Discipline is as essential to the growing Christian as training is to the committed athlete. What are the best 10 to 15 minutes of your day? Consider giving that time to God by focusing on Him. Ask the Lord to help you be consistent.

»sat

Ideally, everyone should continue to learn throughout their life. Do you remember your perception of God when you were 10? Has it changed? If so, how? Thank God for the spiritual growth you have experienced.

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

—Proverbs 1:7

# WHO SAID THIS?

**a** “Like a gold ring in a pig’s snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.”

**B** “An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.”

**C** “Before God, we are all equally wise—equally foolish.”

**D** “You cannot help men permanently by doing for them what they could and should do for themselves.”

**e** “By all means marry. If you get a good wife you will become very happy; if you get a bad one, you will become a philosopher—and that is good for any man.”

# WORD TO THE WISE

## WISDOM ABOUT WISDOM

How would you fill in the following quotes about wisdom? The original words can be found in small print on the right.

1. The wise learn from \_\_\_\_\_ ; the foolish merely repeat it.  
—Michael Novak
2. The Lord set limits on man’s wisdom, but none on his \_\_\_\_\_.  
—Konrad Adenauer, former chancellor of West Germany
3. Nine-tenths of wisdom is being wise in \_\_\_\_\_.  
—Teddy Roosevelt
4. The wisdom of this world is \_\_\_\_\_ in God’s sight.  
—The apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 3:19

IF SOMEONE WANTED TO QUOTE YOU, WHAT WISE SAYING WOULD YOU GIVE THEM?



## »mon

What ranks first in your life? Ask God to help you pursue things He considers valuable, like wisdom, though it costs you all you have.

## »tues

Someone tells a dumb joke and then asks, “Do you get it?” Wisdom’s no joke—Solomon tells us here to sell all we have, if necessary, to “get it.” Pray for the gift of wisdom.

## »wed

How much of your money goes toward things that will make you wiser? Draw up a wisdom “budget” today and bring it to God. Think about ways you can get a better return on your daily investments.

## »thurs

Read Matthew 13:44-46. Usually, the more something costs, the more valuable it is. Has following Jesus ever cost you anything—perhaps some pride or maybe even a friend? Praise God for the value He places upon His relationship with you.

## »fri

Read Proverbs 3:5-6. To play a game, it’s essential to understand the rules. Ask someone to explain something you don’t understand about God or the Bible. Thank

God for the freedom to question and discover truth for yourself.

## »sat

What would you be willing to pay in order to understand everything about God? Make a list of everything you own; check off the things you’d be willing to exchange for God’s wisdom. Ask God for the courage to pay the price when it comes to growing in your relationship with Him.

The beginning of wisdom is this:  
Get wisdom.  
Though it cost all you have, get understanding.  
—Proverbs 4:7

# EXPOSED

“These people make a big deal out of saying the right thing, but their hearts aren’t in it. Because they act like they’re worshiping me but don’t mean it. I’m going to step in and shock them awake, astonish them, stand them on their ears. The wise ones who had it all figured out will be exposed as fools. The smart people who thought they knew everything will turn out to know nothing” (Isa. 29:12-14 MSG).

The Old Testament prophets were loud and blunt. Isaiah gets right to the point. Don’t be hypocrites! God knows the difference between counterfeit Christianity and the real thing. You can’t fake it. God knows your inner motives—if you’re only doing the Christian thing for show, well...get ready for a shake-up.

First turns out to be last. Up turns out to be down. In literature, it’s called a paradox, but the Bible is full of this principle—what you see isn’t always what you get. In this passage, it’s clear that

all believers will eventually be exposed for who they really are. It’s important to trust and listen to wise counsel, but not all advice is God-made. Whose wisdom are you following? Read the entire chapter of Isaiah 29 to learn more about the Israelites who forged ahead with their own plans and forgot who was in charge.

Sometimes it’s easy to look “Christian” on the outside but have doubts deep down about the whole faith thing. Look at Isaiah 29:12-14 again. It’s clear that God despises falsehood, so—heed this warning. Use these verses as a simple reminder that genuineness is important to God. If Jesus is in you—you can be a great example to both the “so-called Christians” and the down-right pagans.

What’s most important? Follow God’s commands to be salt and light in a dying world. That’s as real as real can be. If that’s you, God’s taking notice. He always sees truth and rewards it.

## »mon

True righteousness comes from God. Tell a friend today about something God has done for you. Ask the Lord for true humility.

## »tues

Read Matthew 12:35-37. Words can either help or hurt. Look for an opportunity today to offer some helping words to someone. Thank God for the ability to build people with your words.

## »wed

Taking sides is easy. Being just—or fair—is usually more difficult. Is there someone who is being treated unjustly for whom you need to speak up? Pray for the courage to speak out on that person's behalf (Prov. 31:8-9).

## »thurs

Read Psalm 37:31. Take a minute and write down what's in your heart and on your mind. Ask God to guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7).

## »fri

Everyone "slips" every now and then. But are you walking in slippery places spiritually? Think about the people, places, and activities that can lead you into sin. Pray for the strength to avoid them.

## »sat

The laws of God are guidelines for an abundant life. List the laws of God that you're familiar with. Thank God for giving you boundaries to live within.

↑ The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom, and their tongues speak what is just. The law of their God is in their hearts; their feet do not slip.  
—Psalm 37:30-31

## TIME SLICE

Solomon

Solomon was the **last of only three kings** to rule over a united Israel.

Solomon lived at the turn of the millennium—the **1st millennium B.C.**, that is.

This was the **beginning of the Iron Age**, when countries with iron weapons found that it was much easier to conquer countries who still only had bronze weapons.

Ancient Japan had just started to cultivate rice. But they wouldn't come up with sushi for another couple of millennia. In China, the Zhou dynasty claimed to have "**the mandate of heaven**," that the gods decided they should rule China. People believed them, partly because the **Zhou slaughtered anyone who didn't**.

**The Queen of Sheba** figures big in Solomon's legend. She was a well-known Ethiopian who heard of the wisdom of Solomon and left her land to meet him. See 1 Kings 10:1-13.



»mon

Read Proverbs 12:5. Have you ever wondered why so many people write for advice from a columnist they've never met? Who do you turn to when you need help? Thank God for people whose advice you can trust.

»tues

It's normal when beginning a new game to read the instructions first. Think about something you'll be doing in the near future that will be new for you. See if you can't find some instruction on it in the Bible. Ask the Lord to instruct you as the time for this new thing approaches.

»wed

People have grown used to seeing immediate results. On the other hand, good growth takes time. Look at some pictures to see how you've changed over the years. Ask God for patience as you continue to grow spiritually.

»thurs

Do you ever think of turning to the Bible when someone asks you for counsel? Say a friend needed some advice on how to get along with his father. Where in the Bible would you direct him? Ask God to help you find the answers when you need them.

»fri

Read Proverbs 11:14. List five people you think are wise in the biblical sense. Pray for each of them by name.

»sat

Choose a wise person from yesterday's list and write an encouraging note. Tell this person one way his or her wisdom has helped you. Thank God for placing this person in your life.

Listen to advice  
and accept  
discipline, and  
at the end you  
will be counted  
among the wise.  
—Proverbs 19:20

# TIMELESS GUIDANCE

**T**ake a guess as to how old these quotes are—you might be surprised to see who wrote them (loosely translated, of course).

One thing's for sure: good advice is timeless.

- A. *The smartest people in the world are those who know how dumb they are.*  
SOCRATES, AROUND 404 B.C.
- B. *He who blows off learning when he is young repeats the mistakes of the past, and has no hope for the future.*  
EURIPIDES, AROUND 452 B.C.
- C. *Image is not everything.*  
AESOP, AROUND 550 B.C.
- D. *No wisdom = no happiness.*  
SOPHOCLES, AROUND 466 B.C.
- E. *Education is the best social security.*  
ARISTOTLE, AROUND 344 B.C.
- F. *Wisdom depends more on attitude than age.*  
PLAUTUS, AROUND 200 B.C.
- G. *Nothing is too difficult to understand for those who don't give up.*  
TERENCE, AROUND 185 B.C.



»mon

"You are who you hang out with." Think about your friends. How do they think and act? Ask God to help you honestly look at and listen to them today.

»tues

Who is your best friend? What does your choice of a best friend say about the kind of person you are? Ask God to bless your friend this week.

»wed

Who has the stronger influence in your friendships—you or those you hang out with? Write down one way you can influence your friends for Christ this week. Pray for the courage to be a godly influence on your friends.

»thurs

When was the last time you got into trouble with friends? Were you aware of what was happening or were you just going along with the crowd? Think about whether or not these are friends you need to avoid. Pray for guidance to make the right decision.

»fri

Loyalty is a big issue in friendship. Sometimes people will appeal to loyalty when asking you to compromise yourself. Ask God to help you develop a loyalty for your friends that would never dishonor Him.

»sat

You've heard it said, "Birds of a feather flock together." What kind of birds best describes your friends? Eagles full of dignity and strength? Vultures who feed on others' misfortunes? Pray that you and your friends are what God would have you to be.

Walk with  
the wise and  
become wise, for  
a companion of  
fools suffers harm.  
—Proverbs 13:20





## »mon

Courtroom dramas make for popular television shows. People enjoy hearing a judge make a decision after all the evidence is in. This week's passage examines the evidence concerning life and expresses that the only important thing is knowing and obeying God. Do you believe that? Talk with God about your relationship with Him.

## »tues

Advertisers continually tell you what will make you happy—new jeans, a certain brand of soda, some shade of lipstick. The next time you watch television, notice how many conflicting opinions there are about what will make you happy. Ask God for the joy that only He can give.

## »wed

Fear in this verse can be defined as healthy respect. Take a minute and write a note to someone you respect. Be specific about what you admire in him or her. Show God how much you respect Him by your worship.

## »thurs

Someone once said that God gave 10 "commandments," not 10 "suggestions." Ask God to protect you from a spirit of legalism as you seek to obey Him today.

## »fri

God created you to know Him and to obey Him. You can't do one without the other. Thank God for His willingness and desire to have a relationship with you.

## »sat

The pleasures of this world come and go. What's "in" this year is "out" the next. Only God never changes. Pray for a strong foundation for your faith, one that won't shift during the storms of life.

**Fear God**  
and keep his  
commandments,  
for this is the  
whole duty of all  
mankind.

—Ecclesiastes 12:13b

# Pascal's Wager

*"Let us weigh the gain and the loss of wagering that God [exists]. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all. If you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation that He is."*

**IT ASKS: WHAT DO YOU RISK ON THE IDEA THAT GOD EXISTS? IF THERE IS NO GOD AND YOU LIVE AS IF THERE WERE, WHAT HAVE YOU LOST? LIKEWISE, IF THERE TRULY IS A GOD AND YOU LIVE AS IF THERE WERE NONE, WHAT DO YOU STAND TO LOSE? WHICH OF THE TWO IS THE GREATER RISK?**

This is the famous wager of Blaise Pascal (pronounced blehz pas-KAL), a 17th-century French scientist and mathematician. Pascal more or less invented the barometer. He's also credited with doing the foundation work for calculus. Pascal brooded over the reality of God. After years of thinking, he came to the following conclusion:

**"There are only three kinds of persons; those who serve God, having found Him; others who are occupied in seeking Him, not having found Him; while the remainder live without seeking Him and without finding Him. The first are reasonable and happy, the last are foolish and unhappy; those between are unhappy and unreasonable."**

Blaise Pascal died of a very painful illness when he was only 39 years old. Even to this difficult end, Pascal continued to trust God. Listen to these final words from Pascal, which are strangely reflective of King Solomon's in the Book of Ecclesiastes.

**"It is good to be tired and wearied by the vain search after true good, that we may stretch out our arms to the Redeemer. Jesus Christ is the end of all and the center to which all tends. Whoever knows Him knows the reason of everything."**





»mon

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 tells us that the rhythm of life is part of God's design. With this understanding, we can see both our laughter and tears as part of life. Do you see all of life as a gift of God? Thank God for His timing in your life.

»tues

Are you involved in sports, music, drama, job training, etc.? We grow in our faith when we develop our gifts and abilities. Thank God for this time of "planting" (see vs. 2) as you participate in these activities this week.

»wed

Sometimes we find ourselves in a painful time of "pulling up." The last touchdown has been scored, the final curtain closes, a relationship comes to an end. Thank God for endings, even when they are painful, because they always lead to the openings of new chapters in your life.

»thurs

All of us need time alone. Even with best friends, we inevitably think: "I need to be by myself for a while." Such moments can be time for growth if we allow God into them. Spend some silent time alone today and meditate on Ecclesiastes 3:1-8.

»fri

It is impossible to go through life without mourning. Jesus, too, knows what it is to weep. Read Isaiah 53:3 and pray that you will be as receptive to God's love in times of sorrow as you have been in times of joy.

»sat

How have you seen God's timing in the activities of your life this week? Write down three specific ways you've seen Him work, and thank Him; then tell someone about it.

There is a  
time for  
everything, and a  
season for every  
activity under  
the heavens.  
—Ecclesiastes 3:1

# A Sound for every Season

Wind ~ A cappella singing ~ Trains and planes ~ Raindrops ~ Mountain silence  
Birds singing during the day ~ Bugs and frogs at night ~ Thunder ~ Laughter  
Surf and sand colliding ~ A horse's neigh ~ Cheering crowds ~ Marching bands  
Spoken prayers ~ A baby's giggle



## »mon

Read through the Book of Job this week and next. Read chapters 1 and 2 today and look at your faith honestly. Do you think it is sufficient to get you through the difficult times? Ask God for a faith that withstands testing.

## »tues

Read chapter 3. It is not a sign that we lack faith when we feel depressed over life's difficulties. We, like Job, are still people of God even when we feel as if we have been tossed on the garbage heap. Tell God how you feel today.

## »wed

Read 4–7: Job's first "comforter" speaks, and Job replies. With friends like these, who needs enemies? Do you know someone who is going through hard times? Thank God for friends who can truly understand, and ask Him to make you a true friend.

## »thurs

Read 8–10: "Comforter" 2 and Job's reply. Sometimes our friends let us down. They may not mean to, but it still hurts. Are you angry with a friend because of a misunderstanding or mistake? Resolve to settle it as soon as possible. Ask God to help you.

## »fri

Read 11–14: Job's third "comforter" offers his advice, and Job replies to him. Illness can be a time not

only of physical pain, but also of discouragement and frustration. We usually need extra patience with people who are sick. Our physical condition can never separate us from God's love. Pray for patience in testing times.

## »sat

Chapters 15–31 contain more so-called comfort from Job's three friends. Read Job's words in 16:1–6 and record some of the things you have learned from your reading this week. Pray for a faith that is not dependent on circumstances.

The LORD gave  
and the LORD  
has taken away;  
may the name  
of the LORD be  
praised.

—Job 1:21b

## TIME SLICE

Job

Job never cursed God even  
when his own wife told  
him to.

You might think that  
Genesis is the oldest book in the  
Bible. And you would be wrong. . . .  
Job is potentially the **oldest book in the Bible**,  
written probably around **1500 B.C.**

**Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were Job's  
best friends.** But they also thought it  
was Job's fault that his children  
were killed, for not being  
righteous enough. So  
maybe not bffs.

Some Creationists point to Job's mention  
of the **"behemoth"** and the **"leviathan"**  
as references to dinosaurs, and evidence that  
man and dinosaur coexisted.  
Job 40–41

The first recognized alphabet had been  
recently created by the Phoenicians.  
The **Hebrew alphabet** borrowed  
and modified letters from the  
Phoenician alphabet, but  
apparently decided they  
didn't need to take any  
of the vowels.



»mon

Sometimes we want to challenge God as Job did: "How can such terrible things happen?" Pray from the place of your deepest need with the confidence you will be heard.

»tues

Read parts of Elihu's speech in Job 32-37. How is his speech different from Job's other three friends'? How is it the same?

»wed

Finally God replies! Read chapters 38-41. None of us is big enough to see life from God's point of view. But nothing is bigger than God. Pray for perspective when dealing with difficulties.

»thurs

When Job stopped demanding that God answer his question, he began the process of trusting God. Ask God to help you be still and listen even when you are desperate for answers.

»fri

Read chapter 42. When Job repented of his challenge to God, good things began to happen to him. When we acknowledge who we are in relation to God, we begin to live life fully. Meditate on where repentance may be needed in your life.

»sat

Read Job 42:2 again. This was Job's declaration of trust in God. How much do you trust God? Write your own declaration in a poem or on a poster for your mirror at home.

I know that  
you can do  
all things; no  
purpose of  
yours can be  
thwarted.  
—Job 42:2

# SUGGESTION BOX

*Job was not the only person in the Bible to question the Almighty. It's OK to ask "Why?" sometimes.*

## A PROPHET'S QUESTION:

"How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, 'Violence!' but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing?" (Hab. 1:2-3a).

Read the Book of Habakkuk for God's reply.

## SUGGESTIONS

Write your own question below:

*We are limited...God is not. Write about the limitless power of God and how God's power can bring His best in your life.*

**Are you ready for His answer?**



»mon

Write down your first reaction to trouble. When you're finished, read James 1:12. The word "blessed" means happy. In other words, happy is the person who hangs tough in trials. Ask God to increase your staying power when trouble comes your way.

»tues

Read James 1:2-4, 12. What's your honest response to verse 2? Actually, James wasn't crazy when he wrote this letter. List his reasons why God's people can consider trials as a source of joy.

»wed

Bad times often make us realize how much we need God. Thank God for His love and faithfulness in the good times and bad.

»thurs

Read Psalm 32:7. Write a poem, draw a picture, or make up a song to praise God for being your hiding place and protecting you from trouble. Ask God to help you trust Him in times of trouble.

»fri

Read James 1:12 again. A person who makes it through a trial with faith intact knows God on a deeper level than before. Thank God for trials that help you grow closer to Him.

»sat

Read Psalm 32:10. On Monday, you wrote down your first reaction to hard times. Now write a new reaction to hard times, based on what you discovered about suffering, faith, and God's constant love.

**B**lessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.  
—James 1:12

NO PAIN.  
**NO  
GAIN**

## 4 Gains from Pain

### BACK TO BASICS:

Sometimes it takes sickness or bad times to remind you of what's really important in life. We fill our lives with so much entertainment and world-based goals that we can forget that God is the foundation for everything we do. Pain can serve as a reminder that God is the only essential.

### WAKE-UP CALL:

Sometimes suffering can be a wake-up call that makes you sit up and take notice of your relationship with God. Maybe you've let things slide spiritually and need a gentle nudge to encourage you to hang in there. Keep praying, and trust God.

### EMPATHY:

When someone says, "I know just what you're going through," your first reaction is probably, "Oh, sure." Everyone's situation is unique, but if Kelsey's dad died of cancer last year, and you just found out your mom has cancer, chances are you'd listen to Kelsey. She has been through it. She understands. Suffering can make you more sensitive to other people's pain. Check out 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

### TRUE COLORS:

More often than not, suffering and trouble bring out a person's true colors. Some people faint at the sight of trouble; others become bitter. God, however, wants to make sure His children have what it takes to make a difference in this world. Because of that, He may not rescue you from suffering, but He'll always help you to come through it in one piece and stronger in your faith.



## »mon

Read Psalm 82:3. Write a defense for the cause of people who are treated unfairly, especially the weak, poor, and oppressed. Ask God to help you carry out your defense.

## »tues

Draw a picture of some sort of barrier (a wall, for example), and write on it the barriers you put up between you and others. Ask God to help you remove the barriers and see people from His viewpoint. When you're finished praying, tear up your barrier and throw it away.

## »wed

Take an honest look at your own prejudices. Ask the Lord to help you recognize prejudice in yourself, and then give you the courage to resist it.

## »thurs

Read Proverbs 31:8-9. Think of some ways you can speak up for people who may not be able to give you anything in return.

## »fri

Sometimes one kind thing done for the cause of Christ can do more to advance God's purposes than a dozen headline-grabbing events. Always be aware of the possibilities for doing good. Ask the Lord to use you today to meet someone's needs.

## »sat

God's love for us doesn't depend on our status or appearance. Thank God for not playing favorites, and ask Him to help you do the same thing.

Defend the the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.  
— Psalm 82:3

## TIME SLICE

James

James lived in Jerusalem, which was considered a backwater district in the Roman empire.

James was stoned to death in A.D. 62 on the official charge of "breaking the law."

Hegesippus, an early Christian historian, reported that James was a vegetarian.

Masoretes had just decided to add vowels to the Hebrew alphabet. It only took them 1,500 years.

Nero was Emperor of Rome at the time of James' death. Nero is known for fiddling while Rome burned. Actually, he was a bad musician, fiddles hadn't been invented yet, and Nero wasn't actually in Rome during the fire.





»mon

Read James 3:17. Wisdom has nothing to do with intelligence. Based on this verse, come up with a short definition of wisdom. Begin it with the phrase "Wisdom is . . ." Ask God to give you this kind of wisdom.

»tues

Ambition isn't necessarily a bad thing, but you do have to check your motives for being successful. Use James 3:13-18 as a guide for godly motives.

»wed

Read James 3:17-18. The wisdom from heaven is peace-loving. Think of ways

you can bring peace to others. Come up with a specific plan of action. Ask God for the opportunity to be a peacemaker.

»thurs

The wisdom from heaven is considerate and submissive—not exactly popular terms these days. With God's help, practice putting other people first today. At the end of the day, write how you felt about being submissive and considerate.

»fri

The wisdom from heaven is impartial and sincere. Think back over the last week. Have you been just the opposite? Ask God to make you wise in the way you treat others.

»sat

Read James 3:13-14, and 17. Find a quiet place and spend a few minutes confessing any sin of envy or selfish ambition you've been hanging on to. Thank God for forgiving you and ask Him to give you His wisdom.

↑ The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

—James 3:17

# GOSPEL MUSIC & CHRISTIAN

# HIP TRIVIA

1. Who started the oldest black-owned gospel recording label in the nation?





»mon

Read James 4:8. What does it mean to come near to God? How could you build a closer relationship with God today?

»tues

Read Isaiah 55:6. God wants us to seek Him while He can still be found. What might this verse mean to you? Write down a few ways you will seek Him this week.

»wed

Read James 4:8 again. If you come near to Him, God promises that He will come near to you. He doesn't want to feel far away. Pray to Him right now and thank Him for being there.

»thurs

Write down the first thing you think of when you hear the words "humble" and "submit." According to James 4:6-8, what happens when a Christian is humble and submissive to God?

»fri

Read James 4:10. Draw a sketch of this verse. Spend some extra time in prayer today. Thank God for His greatness, power, and control of the universe. Also thank Him for His love for you.

»sat

Fill in this sentence: I get impatient and complain when \_\_\_\_\_. Read James 5:8-9. Ask God to help you see things from His perspective and trust Him.

**S**ubmit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.  
—James 4:7

# Really?

Martin Luther, the German monk who started the Protestant Reformation, was well known for praying one or two hours every day.

One busy morning, with several services planned in Wittenburg, Luther passed a friend in town. His friend commented that with so many scheduled events, Luther would have to curtail his customary prayer time.

"On the contrary," Luther replied,

**"I HAVE SO MUCH TO DO TODAY THAT I SHALL NEVER GET THROUGH IT WITH LESS THAN THREE HOURS' PRAYER."**

