

# How Do We Acquire Wisdom?



Change sometimes comes very slowly. Other times, change comes rapidly. Depending on the nature of change, we are quite comfortable with slow change, and quite comfortable with rapid change. It just depends.

Rapid change certainly is an accurate way to describe the changes we have seen in our culture. To some, these changes are good. To others, the changes are not good. Again, it just depends. To be more specific, it just depends on your perspective. Perspective is a funny thing because it is not something that just happens. Perspective is formed over time and is informed by the answers that we give to some really important questions...questions like, “What is really important in life?”, “What makes something right or wrong?”, “Is there such a thing as truth, and if so, what makes it true?” The answers that we give to these questions, and other questions like them, will inform and shape how we see things...will shape our perspectives. Another name for these perspectives is “worldview”. Our perspective on the really important questions is our “worldview”.

So, getting back to our perspective on change, whether it is slow change or rapid change, our worldview (perspective) will inform our response to them. If we see a change as bad, it will be because there is something that is part of our core beliefs that tells us that this is bad. If we see a change as good, it also will be because those core beliefs are informing our decision to call the change good.

The changes that we are experiencing in our culture are, to use my grandson’s language, epic, because they affect the very fabric of our day by day lives. Very smart people have opinions on these changes, and these opinions often are contradictory. Therefore, these changes **must** be understood from a perspective that is much more reliable than our limited and often under-informed perspectives. What we need is wisdom. Let me suggest that we look to God gain wisdom so that we can understand His perspective on these changes. After all, isn’t “the fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom”? Wisdom is the application of the fear of God to life. It is living in such a way that we value God above all else. Don’t be mistaken...this is not a terrified, horrified fear, but a fear based on a realistic understanding of who we are and who God is. Based on what the Bible says, God is holy and limitless in His knowledge. A person can have knowledge but still not truly understand.

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It also is possible to have knowledge without discernment. God is not like that. God knows all things and all possible things, and He is morally pure and good. To say God is wise is to say he knows all the implications of His actual and potential actions, bringing about no unintended consequences. Scripture affirms God's wisdom more than two hundred times in verses like Psalm 104:24 and Romans 11:33. In his book, *Introducing Christian Doctrine* (page 85), theologian Millard Erickson, brings light when he writes, *"When God acts, He takes all of the facts and correct values into consideration. Knowing all things, God knows what is good .... God has access to all information. So His judgments are made wisely. He never has to revise His estimation of something because of additional information. He sees all things in their proper perspective; thus He does not give anything a higher or lower value than what it ought to have. One can therefore pray confidently; knowing that God will not grant something that is not good."*



Therefore, it makes sense that, if we are wanting to be able to see things as God sees them (have wisdom), we need to think deeply and humbly about what God's answers are to the important questions of life. To put it another way, we view the answers to the important questions from the starting point of a **biblical worldview**.

I am reminded of the tribe of Issachar (1 Chronicles 12:32). They had an "understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do". Their faith informed and guided their way. Our faith, informed by the Word of God, should guide our way too.

Wisdom is not an end in itself, but a means of shaping us in a way that pleases God. It is a way of thinking about reality that enables us to pursue what is good in life. Through wisdom, God reveals what the values of life are and how they may be achieved. Wisdom is knowledge rightly understood. There's a right way and a wrong way to go in life; a way of wisdom and a way of foolishness; a way of life and a way of death. Wisdom is the skill of living a godly life.

How do we get wisdom so that we can understand the rapidly changing cultural landscape? Here are some verses from the Bible that will help:

"For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding" (Proverbs 2:6).

"An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge" (Proverbs 18: 15).

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6)

"It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment" (Philippians 1:9)