



WISE UP: WISDOM IN PROVERBS

Written by Cherie Noel

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BIBLE CURRICULUM

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FROM THE AUTHOR

The primary goals of *Wise Up* are to make the Word of God more meaningful and to have a life-changing impact on your students. As a Christian school administrator, I have used a variety of curriculum approaches with my students. Too often, however, I found that my students had mastered a great deal of material and factual knowledge without having seen the truth of Scripture at work in their own lives.

Therefore, as I developed this study, it has been my goal that students would draw to themselves knowledge, wisdom, and understanding from the Word of God. They need to learn that God's Word includes guidance and direction for every area of their lives. They need to discuss realistic scenarios to know how to make choices based on God's Word. They need to discern and follow God's calling on their lives—now and in the future.

This study seeks to establish students soundly in the Word of God so they can find answers for themselves. While it is important to begin with sound doctrine and factual knowledge of the Scriptures, students need to go beyond this and apply their knowledge. They need to be presented with the kind of material that will help them comprehend, analyze, and derive personal applications in line with God's Word. The exercises in *Wise Up* should help students form personal convictions based on their own study of God's Word.

As they study wisdom in Proverbs, students will encounter a variety of concepts applicable to their own lives. Each lesson will encourage students to make specific applications of biblical truths. And as students explore God's truth, we trust God to conform them into the image of His Son, Christ (Rom. 8:29). In this, as in every study, we must depend on the Spirit, who will guide believers to truth (John 16:13).

Therefore, I encourage you on two basic points:

- First, you must spend the necessary time teaching your students how to apply God's Word to their everyday lives. You are an integral part of Bible class, and you cannot assume that your goals are accomplished simply because students have completed a workbook assignment. God's Word is alive, and this should be evident in your teaching style and in the way you live it out yourself.
- Second, as you complete each lesson, use it as a launch pad for discussion to make sure that your students rightly understand and apply biblical principles. General facts and Bible knowledge are important, but discussion and activities will help make this truth real and grounded to your students.

Wise Up provides adequate material and variety to keep Bible class both interesting and profitable. Focus on the living Word of God, and pray for the privilege of seeing your students walk in its truth.

Mrs. Cherie Noel

FEATURES OF THIS STUDY

As an academic curriculum and a devotional study, *Wise Up* presents both factual content and personal application material. Students should complete this course with an introductory understanding of wisdom as presented in the Book of Proverbs. Each topic will include discussions of theology, as well as a challenge to better reflect God’s character.

Lessons should help students progress through deeper levels of thought:

- **Knowledge**—learning basic facts
- **Comprehension**—understanding concepts and ideas; recognizing allusions and patterns
- **Analysis**—thinking through the implications of new information
- **Discernment**—perceiving truth from revealed facts and concepts
- **Evaluation**—drawing conclusions; interpreting values to form personal decisions
- **Application**—using the information learned; applying truth to life

Teacher’s Lectures

The lesson content in the Teacher’s Manual can help you prepare and present the truths of this study to your students.

Target Truths

These serve as learning objectives for each lesson.

Teaching Strategy

Each lesson includes explanatory notes for you, the teacher. This section may also include group activities.

Additional Teaching Suggestions

These extra activities or discussions may increase student participation, if needed.

Teacher’s Lesson

This lecture material is presented verbatim—though formatted with headings and bullets in case you prefer to teach from limited notes. Some chapters will not include lecture material, but rather group activities and discussion.

Teacher’s Lesson Notes

Each lesson in the Student Manual contains a fill-in-the-blank outline of the corresponding teacher’s lesson. Students can use this outline as a foundation for their lecture notes, which will help them review for quizzes.

You can purchase digital presentations with these outlines on the *Wise Up* product page at positiveaction.org.

We encourage teachers to approach lessons not so much as a fact-finding process, but as a way to strengthen the students' relationship with God. Perfect truth includes love, and perfect love includes truth, so please take care to present this material in a way that both encourages and challenges your students. Make time for discussion, and encourage your students to share their questions with the group.

Student Exercises

Almost every lesson in the Student Manual includes exercises that students should complete outside of class. These exercises encourage students to seek God's truth and love on their own, while also reinforcing some of the principles from the teacher's lesson. Early in this course, you may wish to complete some exercises together as a group.

The student exercises usually contain at least one section that focuses on personal application. As your students become more comfortable bringing up topics and common problems together, these application sections may spark the best group discussion.

Testing and Evaluation

For courses that require a score or grade, the Teacher's Manual includes a weekly quiz for each lesson, to be taken after students have heard the teacher's lecture and completed the corresponding exercises. Quizzes cover essential themes from both the Teacher's Manual and Student Manual. Question types include short answer, multiple choice, true-false, matching, and short essays.

Quizzes and answer keys are both at the back of this Teacher's Manual. You can purchase editable versions of this testing material on the *Wise Up* product page at **positiveaction.org**.

Some teachers also grade weekly Scripture memorization, as well as the completion of student exercises and extra activities.

Note that these materials can help you evaluate students' mastery of factual content—not, of course, their spiritual growth. However, throughout this Teacher's Manual, you'll find a number of non-graded self-evaluation quizzes that can encourage students to reflect on their priorities and growth thus far.

Completed Pages from the Student Manual

This Teacher's Manual contains a complete copy of the Student Manual. In each lesson, you can find facsimiles of the Student Manual pages with suggested answers filled in.

A digital version of these facsimiles is available for purchase on the *Wise Up* product page at **positiveaction.org**. If presented via projector or screen, these pages can help you review exercises with your students.

Scripture Memorization

At the end of this introduction, you’ll find a Scripture memory program with an assignment for each lesson. In the past, teachers have used this optional component in the following ways:

1. Assign verses to be recited or written in a graded quiz, whether weekly, monthly, or once a semester.
2. Assign verses to be written on the back of regular lesson quizzes, perhaps as extra credit.
3. Evaluate the students’ understanding of the verses by offering a fill-in-the-blank verse test, or one that requires students to match the text of each passage with its reference.

You can find a reproducible verse list on page 10. Note that some weeks are designated for review—on these weeks, we suggest that you review or evaluate all of the verses in the latest unit.

You can find printable verse cards on the *Wise Up* product page at positiveaction.org.

FORMAT AND GRADE LEVEL

Though teachers have successfully adapted and taught this study in grades six through twelve, we recommend this content for the sixth through eighth grade.

As with any other Bible study, your students’ background, Scriptural literacy, and reading level will greatly impact their ability to approach this material. Some students may require additional teacher or parent involvement to understand and complete the exercises in the Student Manual.

NOTES

SUGGESTED WEEKLY SCHEDULE

This study includes 35 lessons—one for each week in an average academic year. In general, teachers can present the lecture content before or after students complete the corresponding exercises in the Student Manual. However, the lecture and the exercises should both be covered before students take the lesson quiz.

Note that this study likely contains more content than you could cover in depth, especially in a three- or four-day-a-week course. Depending on the needs of your students—and depending on the time you spend in discussion or review—you may need to cover some minor points quickly or not at all.

Five-Day Option

Day One	Day Two	Day Three	Day Four	Day Five
<p>Introduce target truths.</p> <p>Begin the teacher's lesson.</p> <p>Introduce the Scripture memory verses.</p> <p>Assign the student exercises.</p>	<p>Finish the teacher's lesson, along with any discussion activities.</p> <p>Review Scripture memory.</p>	<p>Review target truths.</p> <p>Review Scripture memory.</p> <p>Review and discuss the student exercises.</p>	<p>Review lesson material, especially concepts covered in the quiz.</p> <p>Review Scripture memory.</p> <p>Assign or discuss any additional activities.</p>	<p>Administer the quiz and review.</p> <p>Check or quiz Scripture memory.</p> <p>Discuss any student questions or personal application topics.</p>

Four-Day Option

Day One	Day Two	Day Three	Day Four
<p>Introduce target truths.</p> <p>Begin the teacher's lesson.</p> <p>Introduce the Scripture memory verses.</p> <p>Assign the student exercises.</p>	<p>Finish the teacher's lesson, along with any discussion activities.</p> <p>Review Scripture memory.</p>	<p>Review target truths and lesson material, especially concepts covered in the quiz.</p> <p>Review and discuss the student exercises.</p> <p>Review Scripture memory.</p>	<p>Administer the quiz and review.</p> <p>Check or quiz Scripture memory.</p> <p>Discuss any student questions or personal application topics.</p>

Three-Day Option

Day One	Day Two	Day Three
Introduce target truths. Begin the teacher's lesson. Introduce the Scripture memory verses. Assign the student exercises.	Finish the teacher's lesson, along with any discussion activities. Review the student exercises. Review Scripture memory.	Administer the quiz and review. Check or quiz Scripture memory. Discuss any student questions or personal application topics.

FEEDBACK

As a non-profit publishing ministry, we consider teachers our co-laborers in the faith. Each of our curricula remains a work in progress, and the people who teach these studies have a great impact on the scope and format of each new edition. If you have any comments, questions, or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact us—we'd love to hear from you.

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A FINAL WORD

It's our prayer that this study helps you and your students know God's glory, grow in that knowledge, and share it with others. To see the most from this study, we'd encourage you to do the following:

- Spend time each day in the Word. Use the material in this study to guide your devotional reading so that you can present God's truth and love from the heart. Spend time also marking and adjusting the lecture content to suit your students' needs.
- Pray for your students, and ask God to grow you, as well.
- Be vulnerable to your students, expressing questions and confidence in equal measure. Encourage them to explore Scripture with you.
- Be the love and truth you want to see from your students.
- Depend on God's strength and grace, even in your weakness.

WISE UP! SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION REPORT SHEET

Name _____

Teacher _____ Grade _____

Week	Scripture	Due Date	Parent's Signature
1	Prov. 1:5-6		
2	Prov. 1:7-9		
3	Prov. 1:10-11		
4	Prov. 1:12-14		
5	Prov. 1:15-16		
6	<i>Prov. 1:5-16</i>		
7	1 John 2:3-4		
8	1 John 2:5-6		
9	1 John 2:7-8		
10	1 John 2:9-10		
11	1 John 2:11-12		
12	<i>1 John 2:3-12</i>		
13	Eph. 4:22-23		
14	Eph. 4:24-25		
15	Eph. 4:26-28		
16	Eph. 4:29-30		
17	Eph. 4:31-32		
18	<i>Eph. 4:22-32</i>		
19	2 Pet. 1:2-3		
20	2 Pet. 1:4-5		
21	2 Pet. 1:6-7		
22	2 Pet. 1:8-9		
23	<i>2 Pet. 1:2-9</i>		
24	Josh. 1:5-6		
25	Josh. 1:7		
26	Josh. 1:8-9		
27	<i>Josh. 1:5-9</i>		
28	James 3:3-4		
29	James 3:5-6		
30	James 3:7-8		
31	<i>James 3:3-8</i>		
32	James 3:9-10		
33	James 3:11-12		
34	James 3:13-14		
35	<i>James 3:3-14</i>		

TEACHER'S MANUAL

WHAT IS WISDOM?

TARGET TRUTHS

- Wisdom comes only from God.
- The religion of humanism is man's view of the world.
- Wisdom is a Person (Jesus Christ).
- A wise person follows the principles of the Word of God.

TEACHING STRATEGY

Man's Ways Vs. the Ways of God

As this section is read, discuss the differences between humanism (man-centered thinking) and God's ways. Write two headings on the board. As you discuss aspects of humanistic thought, invite students to explain how God's ways differ.

For example:

Humanism

1. There is no Creator.
2. Man is the center of all things.
3. There is no absolute or universal right or wrong (or, we each have the right to determine right and wrong for ourselves).

God's ways

1. God is the Creator of all things.
2. God is the center of the universe.
3. God has commandments and absolute principles by which we should live our lives.

The Future of All Humanistic Thought

With the above list of ideas on the board, have students read Proverbs 1:24-33 and discuss the future that will befall those who reject God and rely on self. Explain that the natural tendency of our sinful flesh is to accept humanistic thought, so there are some areas in our own lives that will drift toward humanism if we are not careful. It is important to realize that God's principles and commandments are there for our good—not to squelch the enjoyment of life. The truth is, only Christians can truly enjoy the benefits of

life within the framework that God designed. The humanists' way of life does not lead to happiness but eventually to dissatisfaction. A life of seeking temporary pleasures and doing only what you desire to do without considering others will only cause you to keep on wanting more and more. Because you essentially make yourself a god, you are assured of having a god who cannot meet all your needs. Soon, you will find that nothing in life satisfies. The only way anyone can be fully satisfied and content is to yield to God's way to live and His purpose for our lives. God created us to be content only when we are trusting in Him and seeking to please Him.

Thus, the first indication of wisdom is the understanding that there are two different points of view about the meaning and purpose of life: God's view and man's view. The truly wise person understands that the Creator God has made him or her for a divine purpose that will bring great satisfaction and contentment.

Wisdom Is a Person

Have students read the verses and complete the section before discussion. As the material is discussed, make the comparisons between the passages in Proverbs and John very evident. After the discussion, write the following equation on the board and discuss its truth based on the Scriptures already studied.

God = Jesus = Word of God = Wisdom

How Wisdom Acts/How the Unwise Act

Take time during these sections to share God's plan of salvation. You may wish to ask your students to write a short paper sharing their personal salvation testimonies. If you do something like this during the first couple of weeks of school, you might gain a good idea early on about which students may not yet have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Don't forget the possibility that some of your students, even the ones who seem to say the right things and who hold "a good testimony" around school, may still be outside of Christ. They may have gone through the motions of Christianity and followed all the rules. They may even sincerely believe that they have done enough externally to prove they merit salvation, yet they still might not be truly trusting and obeying Him. Therefore, you must be careful not to give them a "pat answer" about biblical salvation. Salvation is a new life oriented toward and dependent on God, not just praying a prayer and making a public profession. You need to seek wisdom from the Holy Spirit to lead you in how to approach the topic with each student individually and with your class as a whole.

ADDITIONAL TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

Commercials

If your students watch television, ask them to take notes on commercials for a few days. Ask each student to be prepared to give an example of a commercial that invites the audience to respond to its message based on foolish reasoning.

Share God's Plan of Salvation

Using the discussions as a springboard, you should be sure to share the following basic facts about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- All of mankind is unrighteous and sinful before a holy God. We are unable to save ourselves because of our sinful condition (Rom. 3:23).
- If we die in our sins, then we have no hope of heaven. A righteous, holy God cannot allow sin in His presence. Therefore, sinners must die physically and endure an eternity of spiritual death (torment and separation from God) as well (Rom. 6:23).
- Even though God is holy, pure, and righteous, He is also loving and merciful. Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth to die for our sins. He had no sin of His own for which to die; but out of His great love for us, He came to die for ours (Rom. 5:8).
- If we believe that Jesus Christ is God and that He took our place on the cross, and if we receive Him as our Savior, our sins are forgiven. We become the sons of God and have the assurance of heaven (John 1:12).

TEACHER'S LESSON

Definition of Humanism

Humanism is man's attempt to solve his problems independently of God.

Instead of using the truth of the Word of God as the basis for solving problems and understanding the world we live in, humanists try to find another way of explaining truth. For instance, to explain the origin of the universe, humanists offered the theory of evolution—the idea that everything came into existence by itself. The theory is that from insignificant life forms to the most complex of beings (mankind), everything has evolved over millions of years. Evolutionists reject the Creator God, and thus they reject true knowledge and understanding. All of life is seen from this perspective. Science, history, philosophy, sociology, and political science—every avenue of study is based on this false idea.

God talks very specifically about such people when He says that when they claimed to be wise, they became fools (Rom. 1:22). Jeremiah 8:9 says that when “wise men” reject the word of the Lord, there is really no wisdom at all in them, and they are put to shame.

Two Ways of Looking at Knowledge

Thus there are two ways of looking at the various fields of study. We can either look at all fields of study through the eyes of the Word of God, or we can look at the Word of God through the eyes of the various fields of study. These disciplines in and of themselves are not evil because they can be viewed in the light of God's Word. But when those who study these things fail to acknowledge the absolute truth of the Bible and leave God out of their studies, they are bound to fall short in their efforts to discover and use truth.

Science that teaches evolution rather than creation must either reject the Bible or change the Bible to fit their notions.

History that records events as though mankind could control his own destiny or which fails to acknowledge God's sovereignty and constancy over the centuries falls short of teaching the total truth.

Psychology that theorizes man's problems are merely mental or physical and able to be solved by personal resolve and various therapies (without factoring in the reality of spiritual needs and the sufficiency of the Bible) cannot truly offer lasting help to anyone.

Sociology that assumes drunkenness, aggression, homosexuality, or other sins are just diseases rather than grievances against God cannot offer any effective solutions to the social problems which pervade our culture.

Therefore, if you eliminate the Word of God, you eliminate your access to reliable truth! An education without God will not provide you with fullness of knowledge. Education apart from God is not true wisdom.

L E S S O N 1

WHAT IS WISDOM?

This year we are going to center our study on the key word of the book of Proverbs—“wisdom.” Your years in middle school are a very important time in your life. No longer are you a child, but neither are you an adult. You are entering a time of life when you must learn what it means to be a mature, responsible young man or woman. You will have many important choices to make, and your parents will have to trust that you can make wise choices as you journey through the next few years. In some situations, learning to be wise will mean the difference between success and failure. Learn to be wise, and you will have success.

According to Proverbs 3:13-15, what four things cannot compare to the value or importance of wisdom?

1. silver _____
2. gold _____
3. rubies _____
4. anything else you may desire _____

Many people would value these things above anything else. But why is wisdom more valuable than any of these things?

Wisdom is more important and will last longer than any material possessions.
By wisdom we understand how to obey God and receive His blessing.

WHAT WISDOM IS NOT

God’s Word is very specific about what wisdom is and what it is not. In the next few lessons we will study exactly what wisdom *is*. But first, let’s make sure we understand what it is *not*.

According to 1 Corinthians 2:4-8, there are two types of wisdom. What are the two types?

1. God's wisdom
2. Man's wisdom

How is the wisdom that comes from God described in these verses?

It was ordained by God before earth was created. It is powerful and of the Holy Spirit.

Read Proverbs 21:30. Explain in your own words exactly where wisdom *is* found and where it is *not* found.

Wisdom can be found only in the Lord. It will never be found apart from the Lord.

MAN'S WAYS VS. THE WAYS OF GOD

Anything that denies or belittles God is not wisdom. Without God, there can be no true wisdom. What does Isaiah 55:8 teach us about God's thoughts and actions?

They are different from the ways of the world.

Therefore, atheism or godlessness in any form is not wisdom. One system of thought that teaches ideas opposed to God in today's society is humanism. Humanists say:

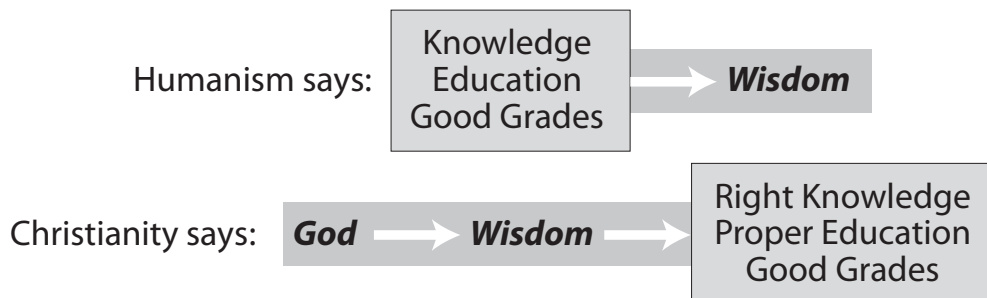
God is not the center of all things. In fact, there is no God, and there is no Creator. Instead, the world came into existence by itself. There is no God to tell us right from wrong. Man is the center of all things and in control of everything that happens. "Right" is anything that pleases man and adds to his pleasure. "Wrong" is anything that man dislikes. It is good and right for us to "do our own thing" or whatever will bring us pleasure and contentment.

Humanists say that *education* is the source of wisdom. Many people in the world have learned much of the knowledge of the world, but that does not mean they are wise.

Humanists say that good grades are the measure of wisdom. However, you may be the most intelligent person in your school and make all the honor rolls, but this does not necessarily mean that you are wise.

Make sure you understand the difference. Education and good grades do not make us wise. God alone makes us wise. A truly wise person will study hard and get the best grades possible because a wise person knows that God has given us the opportunity to understand the world He has created.

Knowledge is the accumulation of facts and ideas. Wisdom is knowing how to apply facts and ideas so that important choices can be made rightly.



Read 1 Corinthians 1:19-21 and 3:19-20 and answer the following questions.

- What will God destroy? (1:19)
the wisdom of the wise
- What is the world unable to use in order to know God? (1:21)
its own worldly wisdom
- What did it please God to use in saving those who believe? (1:21)
the foolishness of preaching
- What is the world's wisdom in God's sight? (3:19)
foolishness
- In God's sight, what are the thoughts of those who are "wise" in the worldly sense? (3:20)
vain or futile

THE FUTURE OF ALL HUMANISTIC THOUGHT

Go back to God's wisdom book, Proverbs, and see what God promises will happen to all those who do not listen to Him and follow Him. Read Proverbs 1:20-33 and describe what will happen to those who reject God and His wisdom.

God will mock them when what they fear has come upon them. Destruction and calamity will come to them. They will experience distress and anguish. God will not answer them.

WISDOM IS A PERSON

Read Proverbs 8:22-31. Compare what is said there with what is said in the New Testament in John 1:1-3, 10-12.

- Both passages are describing Whom?
Jesus (wisdom personified)
- Read Colossians 2:3. According to this verse, what is in Christ?
all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge

The Christ of Creation is the very wisdom and knowledge of God. If you know Jesus, you know God. And if you know and fear the Lord God, you will have wisdom.

HOW WISDOM ACTS

We now understand that true wisdom comes only from God and only through knowing His Son, Jesus Christ. What then does wisdom have to do with salvation?

The first step toward wisdom is trusting Christ as your Savior.

When we know Jesus Christ, we have the capability to act wisely. He can instruct us in wisdom and enable us to be wise. If you are trusting and obeying Christ as the Savior and Lord of your life, then He will change you to help you be more and more like Him (including in His wisdom) in all aspects of life! As we continue through our study of Proverbs this year, we will learn how wisdom applies to every aspect of our lives. Match the following verses to see just a few of the ways that having wisdom will affect your life:

D/A	1. Wisdom prepares for the future.	A. Prov. 22:3
G	2. Wisdom seeks salvation from hell.	B. Prov. 11:30
E	3. Wisdom is obedient.	C. James 3:17
B	4. Wisdom wins souls.	D. Prov. 30:24-26
D/A	5. Wisdom plans for the future.	E. Prov. 28:7
F	6. Wisdom fears the Lord.	F. Prov. 15:33
C	7. Wisdom is peaceable.	G. Prov. 15:24

HOW THE UNWISE ACT

Using the seven examples above that show how wisdom acts, describe how the *unwise* act. In your explanation, do not just write the exact opposite of what the verse says. Use different wording to explain your ideas. For example, for the first one, do not simply say that the unwise do not prepare for the future. Instead, you might say that the unwise are concerned only about what is happening right now. The unwise...

1. are concerned only about now (today)
2. do not worry about heaven and hell
3. are stubborn and rebellious
4. do not care about others
5. do not plan for the future
6. do not respect God
7. have problems getting along with others

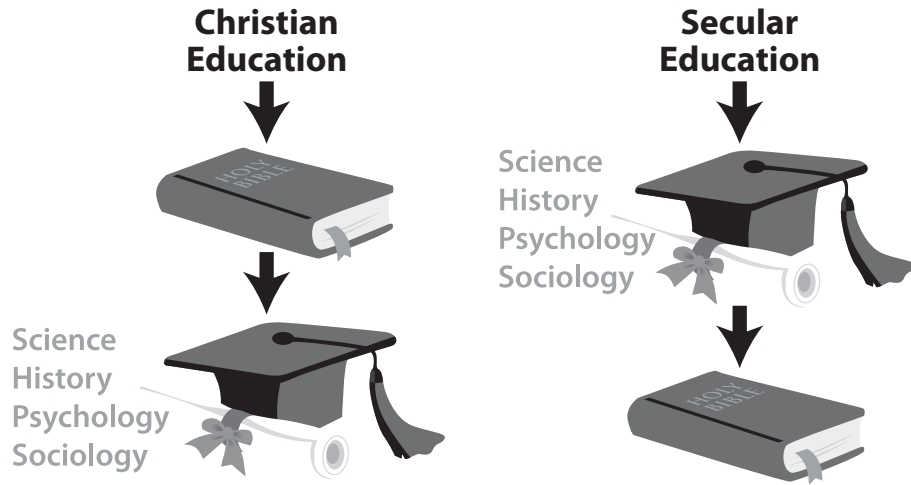
This year, as we study how wisdom works in our lives, we will be studying about our homes, our relationships with others, how we make decisions, what the future will be like, and many, many other ideas. To begin, look at the lists under “How Wisdom Acts” and “How the Unwise Act” and think through how wise you are in these seven areas. List

each idea in one of the boxes below. For example, take item #1. Do you prepare well for the future? If so, write this statement in the first row under the first column: "I prepare for the future." If this is not true of you, write this statement in the first row under the second column: "I am concerned only about now." From this, you will begin to see those areas in which you need to grow in wisdom, and you will be able to plan how to respond wisely in particular situations.

	Wise	Unwise
1.	Answers will vary.	
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		

TEACHER'S LESSON

Humanism is man's attempt to solve his problems
independently of God .



WISDOM AND FOOLISHNESS

TARGET TRUTHS

- The Bible makes a great distinction between the actions of a wise man and a fool.
- Whether we are wise or not is not a matter of age, but rather of knowing and fearing God.
- We need to evaluate our own lives from time to time to recognize any foolish tendencies in our lives.

TEACHING STRATEGY

As your students read the first paragraph of the lesson, emphasize that wisdom has nothing to do with age. Young people can have great wisdom if they are willing to listen to God's Word and follow it. An adult who refuses to follow God and obey Him can be very foolish, or his additional experience in life can enhance biblical wisdom that comes from obeying God.

Wise and Foolish Reactions

One of the greatest insights or keys as to whether we have wisdom or foolishness in our hearts is the way we react to such things as rules, correction, instruction, disagreements, and sin in our lives. Tell your students that as they take notes on each area, they should really consider how they react in such situations. This section can show them more than any other how wise they are. A wise person will take heed to areas that need to be corrected.

The reason for this is that a wise person is not filled with pride. Pride does not want to admit weakness. A person's pride does not want to admit it when he has done wrong. Pride does not want to be corrected or admonished in any way and does not want to accept rules for his life. A proud person is not wise.

After students have taken notes on each section, spend time reviewing and discussing the differences between a wise person and a foolish person. Explain that the word "reaction" means response. These are things we do not begin or initiate ourselves but must respond to when we are confronted by them. God is not as interested in the problems we face as in how we respond to the problems. God knows we will be faced with situations we do not enjoy, but our response in each case shows what our inner character is really like. It is our character with which God is most concerned.

The Key to Wisdom and Maturity

When a young child begins to try to walk, there is a day when he takes the first step. The first step to becoming a mature and wise person involves recognizing that we did not make ourselves. We were created by a loving and wise God to fulfill a unique and special purpose in life. To recognize that great God and the place He holds in our lives is wise indeed. Thus, the first step to wisdom and maturity is having great

respect for and trust in God. These verses say that God searches the earth for those who love Him, respect who He is, and trust Him. Unless we fear the Lord, we will live out our lives in “abominable iniquity” with no other hope.

More About the Fool and the Wise Man

Read the directions with your class and do the first section together. Your students should look up what the Bible says about the fool and write the opposite characteristic that would be a part of a wise person’s life.

Let students complete this on their own and then share ideas with the class. At the end of the section, ask students to consider what areas in their lives are foolish and wise. They should look at the first section regarding reactions as well as this last section in completing their evaluation. Consider leading in a time of prayer before they begin to think through these things. Praying before the Lord will encourage them to take self-evaluation more seriously. Do not go over these but explain that later during the year, we will return to this section to check up and see how we are growing in wisdom.

ADDITIONAL TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

The Meaning and Use of “Fear” in Scripture

Have students use a concordance to look up the word “fear” as it is used in Scripture. See if you can find different meanings that this word has in Scripture. Be prepared to discuss the different meanings with your class.

Composition

Ask the students to think of unwise actions they have observed in their own lives. The lists they made in this lesson may help them. Instruct them to write a composition on how their actions have affected others.

Making Decisions

Have students discuss some decisions they will have to make this week—in class, with friends, or at home. For each one, have students explain what would be a wise decision and a foolish decision.

Courtesy and Rudeness

Discuss the difference between the wisdom of courteous behavior and the foolishness of being rude.

The House on the Rock

Review the story of the house built on the rock and the house built on sand from Matthew 7:24-27. Give students the challenge of finding another similar analogy to emphasize wisdom and foolishness. They can write their own short parable or draw a picture of the comparison.

TEACHER'S LESSON

Definition of a Proverb

A proverb is a short sentence expressing in a few words a well-known truth.

The book of Proverbs is made up of 31 chapters and over 900 proverbs that were spoken, written, or collected by King Solomon, Agur, and King Lemuel. The vast majority of the proverbs were those of Solomon, who spoke 3,000 proverbs, according to 1 Kings 4:32. Many of the proverbs, as you will see, were written in the form of a comparison. In other words, a great truth was often compared to something common with which everyone could identify. Since the proverbs were written thousands of years ago, the comparison is sometimes difficult for us to understand, but the truth is everlasting from generation to generation.

The Main Purposes for Studying Proverbs

Proverbs 1:2-4 suggests five purposes or objectives for studying Proverbs.

- To know God

Proverbs 1:7 says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Therefore, one of the key purposes for any study of Proverbs is to build a closer relationship to God by learning who He is and how He thinks. When we begin to learn who God truly is, we will begin to grow in wisdom and knowledge.

- To know the Word of God

As we study the Word of God, we learn to know God, how He thinks, and how to discern His wisdom. By learning how God thinks, we will begin to understand how He acts and how He intends to work in our lives.

- To know God's principles

God's Word is filled with God's principles that show us how to live our lives successfully. As we study Proverbs, we will learn how to make right decisions in life. Our life choices will be right when they are based on truth.

- To learn how to apply God's wisdom

Everyone has "rough edges" that must be smoothed away. The rough edges God is concerned about are primarily in our character and inner attitudes. When He smooths out these ugly aspects of our lives, our lives will follow a beautiful and wonderful path and demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit.

- To give purpose to life

The Bible talks about people being tossed about with no direction, purpose, or understanding in life. God wants our lives to have direction, goals, and a purpose.

How to Understand Proverbs

- Recognize you have a need

If you think you know all you need to know for your life and that you have no more need to learn, you will not grow. Only by recognizing that we have problems and areas that we need to repent of our sin and change can we begin to grow in wisdom and knowledge.

- Hear

We must be willing to listen attentively to what we will be taught. But hearing in order to learn and grow must be done with the heart and not just the mind. If we just allow the message to affect our ears and part of our minds, we will not change. If we hear with our hearts, we will begin to see differences in our lives.

- Pray

Begin to pray and ask God to help you in two important ways. First, you need to pray that God will help you to understand the great and important truths that you will be taught. Second, you need to pray that God will help you to apply the truths you learn to your own life.

- Study

You need to apply yourself to your study of Proverbs this year. You will be looking up many verses in Proverbs and many other books to teach you great truths and principles for your life. You must be willing to apply yourself to your study, knowing that you will benefit from your study and perseverance.

L E S S O N 2

WISDOM AND FOOLISHNESS

Proverbs contains many comparisons between a wise man and a fool. Being a wise person often has nothing to do with age. Usually an older person does have knowledge and wisdom because of all the experiences of life. One basic reason we need to listen to older people is that they have already dealt with many of the same problems we are facing. But just because a person is old does not mean that he or she is truly wise because true wisdom comes only from God. Sometimes older people still act very foolishly, while young people have great wisdom because they know and follow God.

WISE AND FOOLISH REACTIONS

Read the following verses in Proverbs, and record how a wise man and a fool react to the following types of situations. Be ready to use your notes to discuss each section.

1. Reaction to Rebuke, Reproof, or Correction	
Wise Man's Reaction	Fool's Reaction
(9:8) <u>loves the one who rebukes him</u> _____	(9:8) <u>hates the one who reproves</u> <u>him</u> _____
(15:31) <u>lives among other wise people</u> _____	(13:1) <u>doesn't listen</u> _____
(17:10) <u>accepts it</u> _____	(15:12) <u>will not go to the wise for</u> <u>advice</u> _____
	(17:10) <u>doesn't accept it</u> _____

2. Reaction to Rules, Regulations, and Authority	
Wise Man's Reaction	Fool's Reaction
(10:8) <u>receives commandments</u> _____	(10:8) <u>falls because he doesn't listen</u> _____
	(10:23) <u>enjoy doing wickedness</u> _____
	(17:11) <u>seeks rebellion</u> _____
3. Reaction to Advice, Instruction, Teaching, and Preaching	
Wise Man's Reaction	Fool's Reaction
(12:1) <u>loves knowledge</u> _____	(1:7) <u>despises wisdom and instruction</u> _____
(12:15) <u>listens to counsel</u> _____	(1:22) <u>delights in scorning or mockery</u> _____
(15:14) <u>seeks knowledge</u> _____	(12:15) <u>believes his own way is right</u> _____
(18:15) <u>seeks and gets knowledge</u> _____	(15:5) <u>despises his father's instruction</u> _____
	(17:16) <u>has no heart for wisdom</u> _____
	(23:9) <u>despises wisdom</u> _____
4. Reaction to Arguing, Fighting, and Disagreements	
Wise Man's Reaction	Fool's Reaction
(11:12) <u>keeps quiet</u> _____	(18:6) <u>creates contention</u> _____
	(29:11) <u>says everything he thinks</u> _____

5. Reaction to Sin and Wrongdoing	
Wise Man's Reaction	Fool's Reaction
(14:16) <u>fears God and departs from evil</u>	(14:9) <u>mocks sin</u>
(22:3) <u>anticipates evil and hides from it</u>	(14:16) <u>uncontrolled and careless or reckless</u>

THE KEY TO WISDOM AND MATURITY

As you have seen from the last exercise, the major concern of the Scriptures is not whether people are rich or poor, athletic or musical, smart or slow to learn, well dressed or poorly dressed, outgoing or shy or friendly or lonely. In fact, foolish people judge others by some of these external standards, but maturity teaches us to view others as God views them. God judges us by whether we are wise or foolish. A fool rejects the one true God and does not recognize that the world was created and is held together by Him. A fool does not consider Who it is that provides everything we have. He does not even recognize Who gives him life. He is indeed a fool.

Read Psalm 14:1-3 and explain in your own words how King David described the fool.

He says there is no God. He is corrupt. He does abominable works. He does no good. He does not seek God.

According to Proverbs 15:33, what keeps a person from being a fool?

the fear of the Lord

When the Bible talks about fearing the Lord (as in Prov. 15:33), it does not mean being afraid of God in the way that we fear danger or pain. In this verse and many others, fear means to have a deep respect for God and to give Him great honor. Compare the above verses and explain what you think really is the key to growing up into maturity.

The key to wisdom and maturity is recognizing who God is and developing a deep respect for, submission to, and trust in Him.

MORE ABOUT THE FOOL AND THE WISE MAN

Each of the following areas are very important aspects of our lives. Look up each verse in Proverbs and think about what the Bible says about the fool. Then, in your own words, write the *opposite* attitude or action that a *wise* person would have or show. If there are words in the verses that you do not understand, use a dictionary to look them up.

1. Attitudes	
12:15	A wise person is willing to admit that he is not always right.
14:3	A wise person does not allow pride to control him.

2. Home Life	
10:1	A wise person encourages his mother.
15:5	A wise person listens closely to his father's instruction.
15:20	A wise person loves and honors his mother.

3. What We Say	
15:2	A wise person says the right thing at the right time.
15:7	A wise person disperses (spreads) knowledge and says wise things.
29:11	A wise person chooses his words carefully.

4. Attitude Toward Sin	
13:19	A wise person departs from his sin.
14:9	A wise person does not make light of sin.
14:16	A wise person fears the Lord and avoids sin.

5. Getting Angry	
10:19	A wise person does not say things he shouldn't.
12:16	A wise person does not let his anger get the best of him.
14:17	A wise person controls his temper.

6. Setting Goals and Completing Tasks	
10:14	A wise person will not be destroyed for failing to use his knowledge.
15:14	A wise person seeks knowledge about what he should do.
21:20	A wise person will be careful with his possessions and make wise use of what he has.

Look over the verses in Proverbs that we have studied in this lesson. List some of the characteristics (both of the foolish man and the wise man) that you see existing in your life right now. A wise person evaluates himself and knows himself. As you evaluate yourself, God can help you weed out those foolish reactions and strengthen the areas in which you are showing wisdom in your life.

Foolish Characteristics in My Life	Wise Characteristics in My Life
Answers will vary.	

TEACHER'S LESSON

Definition of a Proverb

A short _____ sentence _____ expressing in a _____ few words _____ a
_____ well-known _____ truth

The Main Purposes for Studying Proverbs:

- To know God
- To know the Word of God
- To know _____ God's principles _____
- To learn how to apply God's wisdom
- To give purpose to life

How to Understand Proverbs:

- Recognize you have a need _____
- Hear _____
- Pray _____
- Study _____

THE EXAMPLE OF WISE MEN

TARGET TRUTHS

- It is possible to learn wisdom by studying the examples of wise men.
- A wise person knows how to handle conflicts.
- It is important to choose priorities wisely.

TEACHING STRATEGY

King Solomon

As your students study King Solomon's values, use the following survey of Ephesians 5-6 to help them understand what priorities are and why they are important to God:

Read and explain Ephesians 5:18-6:9 and Colossians 3:14-25 to help your students understand more about priorities. Here is an outline of the Ephesians passage:

1. Ephesians 5:18-21—a right relationship with God
2. Ephesians 5:22-33—a right relationship with your spouse
3. Ephesians 6:1-4—a right relationship with your family
4. Ephesians 6:5-9—right relationships with authorities at work or school

Young people need to see that their relationship with God is to be their first priority in life (just as it should be their parents' first priority). Since your students are not married, their second priority ought to be their relationships with their parents and siblings. They need to make sure they follow through with their obligations at home. Next in the line of importance is their relationship to their authorities outside their family, particularly the leaders of their church and their teachers. These three areas must be of prime importance to them as God builds wisdom into their lives.

Ask your students to show you where activities and friends fit into the Ephesians outline of priorities. Does this mean that God is not interested in their friendships? The fact is, God is very interested in their activities and friendships, and there is nothing inherently wrong with them—just as long as they are kept in the proper perspective!

Having right priorities means that we put first things first and that we manage our lives decently and in order in accordance with God's priorities as revealed in the Bible. This is how Solomon ordered his life—at least the first part—and he became the wisest man ever known. He had such great wisdom that God used him to write a book full of wisdom.

As students complete the last part of this section, they need to do so with the above teachings in mind.

Before you leave the study of Solomon, however, explain that later in his life, Solomon strayed from the commands of God. He married heathen women and began to worship their gods. When this happened, he did not have the wisdom of God in his life like he had before. It is important for your students to realize that walking with God and learning His wisdom is a continuing need in our lives. We can never allow ourselves to assume that we can get along without God.

Daniel

This section is self-explanatory for the most part. Have your students complete the material on their own and then discuss each conflict as a class. Ask the students to read James 1:5-8 to see how we can obtain wisdom when we need it. Make sure to emphasize the following points:

1. We need to ask God for wisdom.
2. We need to ask in faith, not allowing our emotions or circumstances to toss us about with indecision.
3. We should not be double-minded. We should not want God's way *and* another way. God's will must take first priority.

My Own Conflicts

As students evaluate their own conflicts, explain that for this assignment the most important aspect is not whether or not they handled the example conflict wisely. The important thing is that they learn through this example how to seek God's wisdom faithfully in order to resolve future conflicts.

Blessings in Using the Wisdom of God

One of the greatest blessings that comes in using the wisdom of God is the confidence we have that God knows the ultimate outcome and will work things out for the best as we trust and obey Him, even if the immediate results do not seem to make sense. Not every conflict or problem will be resolved because we cannot change the hearts and lives of others. But we can have confidence that we have submitted ourselves to what God wants and that His way is best even when it is hard.

ADDITIONAL TEACHING SUGGESTION

Wise Leaders God Has Given Me

Have your students list those people in their lives whom God has used to instruct them and teach them wisdom. Next to each name they write, ask them to describe something specific that the person has taught them about living wisely.

TEACHER'S LESSON

We have just studied the life examples of men who sought the wisdom of God and allowed this wisdom to guide their lives. In Proverbs 30, God gives us four examples of wisdom in action. He uses four tiny creatures that have wisdom because of the way they were created to act and that can teach us some important principles.

The Ant: Forethought and Preparation (Prov. 30:25)

- Prepares for the future

The ant prepares for the future by gathering its food during the long summer months in preparation for the winter when he cannot get outside and search for food.

You must prepare for the future in many ways. First, you ought to prepare for your eternal future by repenting of your sins and trusting in Christ alone for salvation. Only in this way will you know that your sins are forgiven and that you can enter heaven one day. Second, you must prepare for the immediate future by getting the knowledge necessary for your life while you have the opportunity (such as during your years in school).

- Prepares to fight against temptation

We need to learn to recognize that Satan will tempt us again and again in many different ways, particularly while we are young. He does not want us to find satisfaction in trusting and obeying God. He does not want our lives to be successful tools in God's hands. We need to prepare in advance for Satan's attacks so that we will know how to combat him and gain victory over temptation. (Throughout the year, we will continue to discuss ways to prevent and avoid sin.)

The Coney (or possibly rock badger) : Security Despite Weakness (Prov. 30:26)

The coney was some sort of creature, perhaps similar to a rabbit, that lived in the rocks and caves of Palestine and Lebanon. The coney teaches us two outstanding lessons from its two major characteristics.

- Realizes its feebleness

We need likewise to recognize our sinfulness and inadequacy before God. As long as we think that we can live profitable lives without God, we will never see what wonderful things God can do with our lives (for His glory and for our good)!

- Hides in rocks for its defense

Throughout the Bible, God compares Jesus to a rock. A rock is something that is strong and sure, something that we can trust not to budge if we put our weight on it. That is what Jesus is like after we trust Him as Savior. He is our protector and our defense. This is what the coney in its wisdom also realized it needed—protection and defense from its enemies.

The Locust: Unity and Cooperation (Prov. 30:27)

The strength of the locusts is in their unity and orderliness. They are not independent of each other; rather, they depend on one another. Even without a leader, they fly in perfect ranks and formation. We can learn the need to be unified in Christ—not bickering or gossiping or being jealous and critical of one another, but relying on one another for counsel and strength.

The Lizard (or spider): Boldness (Prov. 30:28)

We do not possess enough linguistic evidence to determine with certainty whether this Hebrew word refers to a lizard or a spider. Whichever animal is in view, an outstanding characteristic of it is boldness. Though small and despised, these creatures live in the palaces of kings. This is a wonderful picture of sinful man. Though there is nothing in ourselves that merits a special status, we have the right (through Jesus) to enter daily into the very throne room of God.

SELF-EVALUATION

Do I Use Sound Wisdom?

Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5 for each of the following, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest level of wisdom used in each situation.

1. ____ I listen to adults' instructions willingly so I will know how to discern right from wrong and choose right.
2. ____ I ask the Lord to give me the wisdom I need for difficult situations.
3. ____ I study God's Word on my own so I will be able to judge right from wrong.
4. ____ I do not make decisions frivolously. I carefully think through what I should do.
5. ____ I do not go along with my friends' ideas without thinking through what is right and wrong.
6. ____ When my parents or a teacher must correct me, I listen closely to learn from my mistakes.
7. ____ I do not decide what I will do based on my feelings and what others are doing but rather on what the Bible teaches.
8. ____ I do not argue about obeying God's rules when they are clearly set forth in the Bible.
9. ____ When I get involved in a possible conflict, I listen carefully and think through what I will do and say.
10. ____ When I am organizing my time, I think about my priorities and what is the most important thing to do first.

- What do my answers to these questions suggest about how well I apply wisdom?

- Which areas of my life most need to grow in wisdom?

L E S S O N 3

THE EXAMPLE OF WISE MEN

We are going to spend most of this lesson seeing how two men pursued God's wisdom. God had greatly blessed both of these men, King Solomon and Daniel. They both became famous and were able to influence the lives of many people with whom they came in contact. Not only were they wise, but they also enjoyed fame, fortune, and great success during their lifetimes. Look carefully at how and why God blessed them and think about how you could glorify God if He would bless you with wisdom and help you make right choices throughout your life.

KING SOLOMON

One great reason to study the life of Solomon is that he is the primary author of our main “textbook” for this class this year—the book of Proverbs. God can use the life of this great king to teach us the difference between the wisdom of God and the perceived wisdom of the world.

King Solomon was the son of the great King David. He was fortunate to have had a father like David who loved the Lord God all the days of his life. David taught Solomon the value of trusting in God and having the wisdom of God above all else. If you read Solomon's story, you will see once again the value of having the fear of God as your first priority. Our “priorities” are what we value as important in our lives. Read part of the story of Solomon (1 Kings 3:3-15), and answer each question below:

What did Solomon learn from his father? (vss. 3 and 6)

He learned to love the LORD and walk in His commandments and to have
truth, righteousness, and uprightness of heart.

How did Solomon view himself? (vss. 7 and 8)

as a servant of God—a child who did not know how to act in the midst of a great people

For what did Solomon ask? (vs. 9)

an understanding heart to be able to discern between right and wrong

For what did Solomon *not* ask? (vs. 11)

long life, riches, or vengeance on his enemies

List what God gave Solomon (in the order of their priorities). (vss. 12 and 13)

a wise and understanding heart, then riches and honor

What did God require of Solomon? (vs. 14)

Solomon had to keep God's commandments.

What reward did He promise him? (vs. 14)

God would lengthen his days.

Solomon was the king of Israel. He was rich and famous, and—humanly speaking—he had no need of anyone or anything. Yet Solomon saw the need to seek God and the wisdom of God first. What conclusion can you reach about priorities for your own life? Make a list of things that are important to you. You might include friends, school, music, sports, family, church, or anything else that is important to you.

1. Answers will vary.
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Of the things you have listed, which three do you think ought to have the highest priority in your life?

1. Answers will vary. _____

2. _____

3. _____

DANIEL

During the reign of Jehoiakim, Daniel and three of his companions were taken captive to Babylon. Their superiors recognized them to be excellent young men. Because of their special qualifications, they were selected to be trained for the king's service.

Daniel 1:4 explains specifically what the Babylonians saw in Daniel and his friends that impressed them. List these things below:

1. without blemish or defect _____

2. handsome (may be translated well-favored) _____

3. skillful in all wisdom (intelligent) _____

4. possessing much knowledge _____

5. gifted in understanding and discernment _____

6. able to serve in the king's palace _____

7. able to learn a new language _____

All of these are qualities that people might admire in you, also. Good looks and a noble heritage are nice to have, but notice the emphasis on the wisdom of these young men and on their aptitude to learn and to teach.

Daniel and his friends got their wisdom from God! Their wise responses helped them through three conflicts with the Babylonians.

Read Daniel 1:8-16. What was the first conflict?

They were asked to eat the king's food, supposedly so that they could grow stronger. But in order to eat that kind of food, they would be forced to violate God's law, and they did not want to go against God.

How did the wisdom of God help Daniel resolve the conflict?

Daniel proposed a creative alternative. He respectfully proposed a testing period during which he and his friends would eat only vegetables and water. God blessed them and caused them to prosper during this period, so much so that their authorities were amazed and gladly permitted them to continue honoring God.

Read Daniel 2 to find out about the conflict between pagan magic and the wisdom of God. What was the conflict?

King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that none of his wise men could interpret. As a result, it was decided that the wise men were to be killed for their inability to interpret the dream.

How did the wisdom of God help Daniel resolve the conflict?

Daniel asked the king not to kill the wise men if he could interpret the dream, and God gave Daniel the correct interpretation.

Read Daniel 3 to find out about the conflict between heathen idolatry and loyalty to the true God. What was the conflict?

Daniel's friends would be thrown into the fiery furnace if they did not bow down before the king's image.

How did the wisdom of God help Daniel's friends resolve the conflict?

They remained loyal to God and were thrown into the furnace, but God did not allow them to be burned.

You will learn that you will have conflicts of many kinds in your life. Friends will try to tempt you to do wrong. Situations will arise in which you will have to make important decisions for yourself. As in Daniel's situation, your parents may not be able to help you make a decision. You will be responsible to make wise choices on your own.

Share a situation in which you had a conflict to resolve. What was the conflict?

Answers will vary.

How did the wisdom of God relate to the situation?

Answers will vary.

What choice did you make in the situation? Was it a wise choice?

Answers will vary.

BLESSINGS FOR APPLYING THE WISDOM OF GOD

God blesses our lives in many different ways as we trust in His wisdom—just as Solomon and Daniel received great blessings. Read the verses from Proverbs listed on the next page and write out each blessing God promises for using the wisdom that comes from Him.

After seeing some of the rewards and results of true wisdom, it is obvious why God says that those who reject Him are truly foolish.

- 1:33 safety and lack of fear of evil

- 3:2 long life and peace

- 3:13 happiness

- 3:17 pleasant, peaceful life

- 3:24 lack of fear, ability to sleep peacefully

- 4:12 protection from stumbling

- 4:22 good health

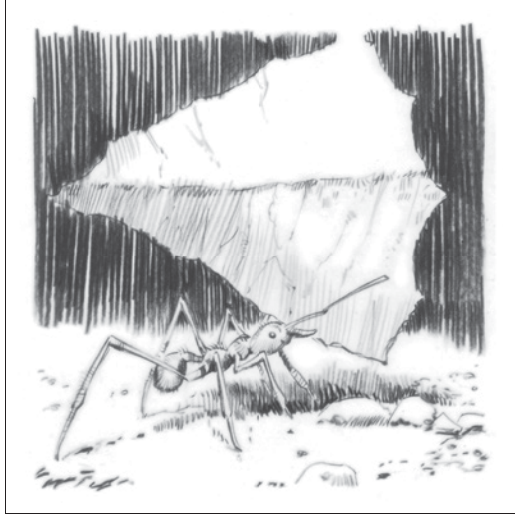
- 8:35 favor from the Lord

- 24:5 strength

- 24:14 reward

TEACHER'S LESSON

Proverbs 30:24-28



Forethought and Preparation



Security Despite Weakness



Unity and Cooperation



Boldness