

10. Developing Wisdom as a Ministry Skill

In the New Testament, wisdom is most often used to speak of the ability to understand the Word of God and the will of God and to skillfully apply that understanding to life. We see that wisdom involves three things:

1. wisdom speaks of the ability to understand the Word of God
2. wisdom speaks of the ability to understand the will of God
3. wisdom speaks of the ability to skillfully apply that understanding to life

First, we see wisdom requires that a person learn to understand the Word of God. Many people think that because people have become Christian leaders they understand the Word of God. We see from Scripture that such an assumption may not be true. The disciples walked with Christ for more than three years. They heard Him teach and they saw Him perform miracles. However, that did not mean they understood the Word of God. Luke 24:44-45 says, “Then He said to them, ‘These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.”

The disciples were very familiar with the Old Testament, but they did not understand what the Scriptures taught about Christ until Christ opened their understanding. Today, there are many people who have a knowledge of the Word of God but lack understanding. Of course, we know that is true for all those who are not yet Christians. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.”

However, it is also true that many Christians do not understand the Word of God. Just three verses later, 1 Corinthians 3:1 says, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.” Ephesians 4:14 says, “That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” Then, Hebrews 5:11-14 adds, “...of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” In these verses, the word that is translated “babe” or “child” speaks of one who is not yet able to speak clearly. We might call such a person a spiritual toddler.

Christ knew that the disciples lacked understanding of the Word of God. That is why He gave them a promise the night before His crucifixion. In John 14:26, Christ promised, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” We see that one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to teach us and give us understanding of the Word of God.

In 1 Corinthians 2:9-10, we are told, “But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” In these verses, we see that Christians can only really understand the Word of God when God reveals the meaning through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit carries out this ministry by comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 1 Corinthians 2:13 says, “These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” Christians will only have wisdom to understand the Word of God as they depend on the Holy Spirit to teach them.

Second, in addition to understanding the Word of God, wisdom means that we also learn to understand the will of God. 1 John 5:14-15 gives us a wonderful promise, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” In these verses, we see that the Lord promises to answer our prayers. There is only one condition to this promise. The condition is that we pray according to the will of God. That means we must understand the will of God in order to pray according to the will of God.

In order to understand the will of God, we have to understand those passages of Scripture that talk about the will of God. The word that is translated “will” in 1 John 5:14 is used sixty-four times in the New Testament. For example, 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” In verse 18, we see that it is the will of God to give thanks in every situation. Paul and Silas demonstrated that they understood that it is the will of God to give thanks in every situation. Acts 16:25 says, “But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.”

In Colossians 1:9, Paul prayed, “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” In this verse, Paul prayed that the Colossians would become filled with the knowledge of the will of God so they would have all wisdom and spiritual understanding. In the same way, we need to pray both for ourselves and for others that they would be filled with the knowledge of the will of God.

Third, wisdom speaks of the ability to skillfully apply that understanding to life. Christians can understand the Word of God, and even the will of God, and yet not know how to skillfully apply that understanding to life. Each day, we all face many different situations. Here, we see that true spiritual wisdom will give us the ability to apply the Word of God to each situation, so that we act in a Biblical way rather than a worldly way. Many Christians have never even realized that the Word of God shows us how to think and act Biblically.

Earlier, we quoted Colossians 1:9 which shows that Christ wants us to be filled with the knowledge of His will. Colossians 1:9-12 also tells us what results can be expected as we skillfully apply what we have learned from the Word of God about the will of God. Those verses say, “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be

filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.” As we are filled with the knowledge of His will, these verses tell us that:

- ◆ we are to walk worthy of the Lord
- ◆ we are to be fully pleasing to Him
- ◆ we are to be fruitful in every good work
- ◆ we are to be increasing in the knowledge of God
- ◆ we are to be strengthened with all might according to His glorious power
- ◆ we are to have patience and longsuffering with joy
- ◆ we are to give thanks to the Father

We will only be able to do these things as we ask Christ to guide us through His Spirit. 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 says, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”

Many Christians make decisions and act based on their own human wisdom or the wisdom of others. In these verses, we see that we are to depend on the Holy Spirit to give us godly wisdom to make decisions, and then, depend on His strength to carry out those decisions. The Holy Spirit will guide us to make wise decisions as we pray and ask what Scriptures would apply in this situation. Then, as the Holy Spirit recalls various Scriptures to our minds, we will know how Christ guided His disciples, and the New Testament church, when they faced similar decisions. Then, we can ask Christ to help us to apply that wisdom to the particular situation we are facing. The Holy Spirit will guide us to make a wise decision that is based on the Word of God. Then, the Holy Spirit will give us the power to carry out that decision.

The Lord will greatly use those we are training as we help them learn to develop godly wisdom, rather than depend on human wisdom. Then, we get to enjoy the privilege of seeing how the Lord works in and through their lives just as he is working in and through our lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing spiritual leaders grow in godly wisdom so that they are becoming equipped to do the Lord’s work in the Lord’s way.