

Wisdom over Foolishness

“The LORD brought [wisdom] forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old” (Proverbs 8:22).

Scripture: Proverbs 8:22-31

Song: “Our God Is an Awesome God”

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was a child prodigy who composed his first songs at age 5 and performed for European royalty when he was just 6. Mozart had an amazing ability to compose all the musical parts of a piece without rewriting a note. Unfortunately, he did not live a wise life. He was terrible at handling money and fame. He died a pauper at 35.

The book of Proverbs highlights the virtue of wisdom, and its importance cannot be overstated. Knowledge and wisdom are related but not the same. Wisdom combines knowledge with understanding, humility, and prudent actions or words. Someone may have tremendous knowledge, like Mozart did, and yet lack wisdom.

In our own life, we may have read large portions of the Bible. We may even be able to quote passages that tell the right way to live to honor the Lord. But knowledge alone falls short of the wisdom we need to effectively live out our faith in *obedience* to God’s Word. It’s important that we not stop at just *knowing* what the Bible says about loving God; we need to seek His wisdom so we may truly honor and please Him.

Father, I ask for Your wisdom to guide my decisions, actions, and words. In Jesus’ name, amen.

June 27–July 3. **Judy Carlsen** is a new Arizona resident. She enjoys reading, photography, travel, and her three grandchildren.

Holding Us Together

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together
(Colossians 1:17).

Scripture: Colossians 1:13-17

Song: “He Knows My Name”

Laminin is a cell-adhesion protein molecule that quite literally holds the body together. It’s an integral part of almost every tissue of an organism. Scientists have used a cross-shaped diagram to express the structure of this molecule. And while in nature, laminin molecules are not rigid, and their shape flexes about, still for the believer looking at the diagram of the molecule that holds our bodies together can be a reminder of the one in whom all things hold together.

When our sin brought instability and chaos into the perfect world God created, God was not taken by surprise nor was He thwarted. Even when He created us, He knew He would also need to redeem us. God has never been out of control, not even for one moment. And in Christ, the Word through whom the world was created, all things hold together.

There are times we may feel, even as believers, as if our lives are out of control or falling apart. We may even begin to wonder if God has forgotten us. But today’s verse makes it clear that Jesus, who is God, knows all about us. He holds everything together, and we can depend on Him to hold us together, no matter what might seem to threaten to tear us apart.

Father, it brings me peace to know You are in control and holding all things together. I choose to trust You in the chaos. In Jesus’ name, amen.

No Longer an Enemy

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior (Colossians 1:21).

Scripture: Colossians 1:18-21

Song: “I’m a Child of the King”

As captain of several British slave ships during his seafaring career, John Newton continued to invest in the slave trade even after his retirement. It wasn’t until he found himself on a sinking ship while traveling that he cried out for God’s mercy. As he prayed, the storm in which the ship was languishing began to calm. Upon arriving safely home, Newton began searching out the truth about God and came to understand his own need for a Savior. He received the gift of salvation, and from that point on, his life completely changed. He denounced the slave trade, was an outspoken abolitionist, and became a minister of the gospel who wrote the beloved song “Amazing Grace.”

Many people who do not yet know Jesus as Savior would never imagine they are enemies of Jesus. They might have a positive view of Him, seeing Him as a great teacher or a holy man. But the Bible tells us that a person is either for or against Jesus. There is no fence-sitting concerning Him.

Following Jesus is the most important decision we will ever make. To be saved we must acknowledge our sin and place our trust in the only one who has the power to rescue us.

Father, I acknowledge Jesus as the one and only Savior of the world. Thank You for making it possible for me to become Your child by coming to You in faith, believing You can save me from my sin. In Jesus’ name, amen.

He Cares for Our World

Praise the LORD, my soul. LORD my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty (Psalm 104:1).

Scripture: Psalm 104:1-15

Song: “Rejoice, the Lord Is King”

When we look into the night sky, we see myriad stars, too numerous to count. Of course the most significant star for us is the sun. This relatively small but vital ball of flaming hydrogen and helium warms our seas, gives us weather patterns, and provides energy to grow green plants for food and oxygen, just to name a few of its benefits.

When God created the sun, moon, and stars, He hung them in specific places. He placed the sun in exactly the right spot so Earth would have just the right warmth—not too hot, not too cold. If the Earth were to move away from the sun just a little, it would not take long for people to freeze. And everything would burn up if the sun came closer to our planet. The calculations we would need to figure out this perfection would make our heads spin. But God doesn't need a calculator.

God not only made the right measurements when He placed the sun in our sky; He also knew exactly how to position our solar system so the planets would orbit precisely as they do. God is all-knowing. He had His creation all figured out without the assistance of anything we call high tech. How mighty and good He is!

Father, Your perfect planning of creation is amazing. Thank You for keeping everything on the right path, making Earth secure. Thank You for caring for our world. In Jesus' name, amen.

Even the Creatures Praise Him!

How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures (Psalm 104:24).

Scripture: Psalm 104:24-35

Song: “All Creatures of Our God and King”

At the zoo it's fun to watch the river otters play together or the chimpanzees having a romp. Great bears and ferocious lions are remarkable in their size and strength. Even the basking, slithering snakes are fascinating. My grandchildren like to point out the differences that make each animal unique. Whatever creature we might be looking at—even a bug—puts God's creative wisdom on display.

In the Garden of Eden, God gave Adam the creative ability to name all the animals, and God brought them to see what the man would call them (Genesis 2:19-20). Later, when Eve joined Adam in the garden, her lack of fear at the serpent's appearance suggests that before sin, wild creatures and humans coexisted peacefully (3:1-6). Sadly, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command, the creation itself was marred by their sin, and safety from danger disappeared (3:6-21).

It's still true, though, that God's creatures praise Him in their own ways—even vocally. Songbirds sing. Dogs howl. Elephants trumpet. But even in their very existence—the design and function of each one—they endlessly proclaim the wisdom and power of their Creator.

Father, what a delightful picture Your Word paints of Your creatures bringing praise to You! Thank You for caring so faithfully for all that You have made, including me. Today I will join in praising You. In Jesus' name, amen.

The Real One

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word (Hebrews 1:3).

Scripture: Hebrews 1:1-4

Song: "His Name Is Wonderful"

Often when a couple becomes engaged, the man places a beautiful diamond ring on his future wife's finger. The ring is a symbol of his love and his promise to her to be wholly united in marriage. Imagine, though, if the man paid thousands of dollars only to find that the diamond was a fake. Despite the jeweler's claims, the supposed diamond was a lovely cubic zirconia. The fake diamond would give off a rainbow of colored light, while a real diamond has a white brilliance.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is truly God—"the radiance of God's glory," the exact representation of God. Jesus looks like God the Father because He is exactly the same in essence. Like His Father, Jesus is Creator of everything. He holds the world together. In His full glory, He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and omnipresent like His Father.

As God the Son, Jesus is co-equal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. This important three-in-one Trinity is difficult, if not impossible, for our finite minds to fully comprehend. Yet we know that each member of the Trinity was active in creation and exists eternally. Together they are God, and Jesus is God's Son—for real.

Father, thank You that we can know what You are like because You have shown us through Your Son, Jesus. Guide me in reflecting His beauty and truth to those around me today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Light over Darkness

In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not (John 1:4-5, *KJV*).

Scripture: John 1:1-14

Song: “The Light of the World Is Jesus”

Rembrandt, a master Dutch painter of the 1600s, was famous for his art's shadows and light. One of my favorite pieces is *Adoration of the Shepherds*, depicting the shepherds as they gaze at newborn Jesus. At first the painting seems all darkness. As you look closer, though, your eyes adjust to the focal point.

In Rembrandt's theme of light over darkness, the predominant space outside the manger scene represents the darkness of our sinful world. Jesus was born as the light of the world to shine in the darkness and bring salvation to all who, like the shepherds, would receive Him.

But most of the world doesn't understand God's light, as was evident during Jesus' time on earth. Many, including religious and political leaders, rejected Him.

Still today many do not understand who Jesus, the light, truly is. The enemy has blinded their eyes, so they walk around in spiritual darkness. But Jesus is able to overpower the darkness, to open people's eyes when they call on Him to be saved. Suddenly it's as if a lightbulb turns on in their understanding, and the light of truth dispels their spiritual darkness. For the first time, they are able to see Jesus for who He is.

Father, cause Your light to shine through me, that others might desire to call on You and be saved. In Jesus' name, amen.