

- I. Set Up¹ / Transition Video about computers or robots

- II. Introduction
 - A. Walter and his producers did a pretty good job of forecasting what was coming our way. They missed on specifics – their view of the future was much bulkier than it should have been. And, with a few exceptions, they tended to underestimate the changes that would happen.
 1. We do not have space travel or flying cars, but the phones we carry around are more powerful than anyone imagined they would be. And of course they do not represent the cutting edge of power. The latest and greatest, the hottest and most powerful computers are exponentially more powerful than an iPhone. Some can now assimilate up to 850 million pages of data in a matter of seconds.
 2. But computer “intelligence” is narrow and limited. We do not yet have anything resembling the robot maid named Rosy from the Jetsons because for all the things computers can do, they are very bad at practical things, like recognizing that a towel is a towel and folding it.
 - B. We can learn from where they went wrong. One of the things I want to highlight today is the difference between “smart” or “intelligent”, and wise. And drive home the point that wisdom is what we are after.
 - C. We want to live well – in light of today and tomorrow and – I would argue – eternity. That doesn’t simply call for information. It demands the right information, the ability to think rightly with it, and the character and conviction to act on it. Many people are smart but not wise. They have sky-high IQs, but lack the insight or discipline to live a life that works.^{2,3}

- III. By way of review, we’re looking in the book of Daniel for insight on how to navigate today and whatever the next twenty or thirty years might send our way.
 - A. We are doing this because Daniel and his young Jewish friends navigated life in Babylon pretty well.
 - B. When they were in their early teens their homeland was overrun by the Babylonians, who marched them back to their capital – the Death Star, which was large, powerful, very advanced and quite evil.

- C. They were separated from the other Jews and enrolled in a palace internship – one with many upsides: they ate great food, they got a great education,⁴ they were not slaves. But one with some downsides as well.
- D. But in spite of the obstacles they faced – which likely included racism and pretty quickly included jealousy – they did pretty well.
- E. Two weeks ago I said that we should take notes on how they did it. Last week we focused on their courage, noting that they embraced the “even if” scenario.
1. They had a commitment to God that transcended an easy life. Their faith, their confidence in the goodness and wisdom of God, was strong enough that they said, “even if he doesn’t save us,” we’re following him. He’s too good not to.
 2. We then thought about what that might mean for us.
- F. Next week I am going to focus on their humility – which I think will be important for us in the days ahead, but we need to understand it. And then we’ll look at their resolve (their grit, resilience, tenacity).
- G. Right now I want us to think about their wisdom. Their skill at living a life that works, and in particular, their ability to think clearly when lots of other people are not.

IV. Let me frame things this way.

- A. In the book I wrote I said that we are here (X) and if a handful of glacial forces keep slowly remaking the world – and if no monsters crawl out from under the bed – then we are headed here (Y).
- B. People are generally less focused on where society is headed and more focused on individual success. The assumption – which is cultivated in this culture – is that we are here X and that where we want to be is here (Y), which is generally a spot where we are richer, thinner, more powerful, happier, younger and have a bigger house, nicer car and more sex. And most of what we read, most magazine articles and talk shows, focus on the techniques and tools that get us there.
- C. Self-help books, articles in *Fast Company*, *INC*, *Oprah* and *Forbes*, podcasts by Tim Ferris and Tony Robbins talk about what to do or how to think in order to climb the ladder. *Men’s Health* or any of three-dozen women’s magazines talk about communication strategies, diets, exercise plans and other methods to be more successful. What we get are tools, techniques and inspiration.

V. Daniel goes in a different direction. He questions more basic assumptions. He challenges the idea that we know what matters, what a good life looks like. He ends up highlighting humility and godliness. He celebrates faith and wisdom. The section I want us to look at today is found in chapter three.

A. In Daniel chapter one we read about their capture, relocation and “re-education.”

B. In chapter 2 we get a glimpse of palace life.

1. Nebuchadnezzar has a dream and demands that his advisors interpret it, only he will not tell them what it was. They cannot do it. Nebuchadnezzar announces that he is going to have them all killed. There is a lot of hand-wringing in the palace and then Daniel steps in, explains what the dream was and what it meant. And in the process he gives full credit to God and shows some depth.⁵

2. The palace “wise men” look like boys – and Nebuchadnezzar comes off as a spoiled idiot – more on that later.

VI. In Daniel 3 we read as everyone but Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego gets caught up in a certain nationalistic hype. If you read this passage aloud it has a hypnotic, mesmerizing quality to it – one that brilliantly conveys the mood Nebuchadnezzar is trying to manufacture.

A. Nebuchadnezzar has a 90-foot-tall statue of himself made – one that is covered in gold. And then he commands this array of government minions – the text keeps repeating this list, “the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials” – to bow down whenever they hear the sound – and here we get another long list – “the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp or other kinds of music.”

B. This passage reminds us that idols are dumb.⁶ But it also shows us how easy it is to get carried along with the crowd. To get lost in some kind of emotional fervor, especially if music is involved.⁷

C. Lots of people comply. But Daniel’s friends do not. And so they are turned in. And Nebuchadnezzar goes ballistic on them, and says, “I’m going to play the music again and when you hear it you need to worship the idol.”⁸ But they still do not relent. Instead they issue a great reply to the King. I read it last week. Let me read it again. I think it’s the highlight of the chapter – even better than them surviving the fames. It starts with verse 16:

1. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if

a) Here it is! They are at the point where they are pulled forward by God alone, not by what God can do for them.

2. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”⁹

D. At this point they get thrown into the furnace and survive. It’s a great passage. Very fun.¹⁰

E. There is a lot in chapter two and three of Daniel. The response of the young Jewish boys is courageous and gritty; it reflects a right order of priorities; it reflects obedience. What I want to focus on is the fact that it is uncommonly wise.

F. We need courage to do the right thing, but before that, we need to know what the right thing is.. This requires wisdom.

VII. I want to make five points about wisdom, based on The Book. I want us to drill down on the counsel God says we need in order to lock in on the right direction.

VIII. First: Wisdom is practical insight for a life that works.

A. There are two things to see here.

1. For starters, God gives us a head start if we will listen. His Law is not some bipartisan effort to craft something that makes sense at the moment, it is based on the deep rhythms of the universe. His moral Law is grounded in His character and it reflects how the world he made works.

2. Second, wisdom is not just what we understand it is what we do.¹¹ High IQs and Ivy League degrees suggest that you are smart.¹² But biblically speaking, you can be a smart fool.

3. Look, we do not become wise by knowing things.¹³ In fact, you could memorize the book of Proverbs – the biblical book written to help people be wise – and still be a fool unless you apply it.

B. The biblical definition for wisdom I like is: godly character in action.

1. Wisdom is not sage religious advice; it is not intellectual acumen. Biblical wisdom is character in action.^{14, 15}

C. So let me ask you, when people watch you, what do they see? Ambition? Money? Wit? Confusion? Wisdom? Would they be inclined to say, “godly-character in action?” How would they describe you?

IX. Point number two: Wisdom is moral and more.

A. Wisdom is not just practical, it is also moral, there is an ethical clarity baked into it¹⁶ – which is actually a bit redundant. We do not think this way, but the call to holiness is really a call to a life that works. Sin in any form – from ignoring God to adultery – is self-destructive behavior. It’s foolish. It’s a bad plan.¹⁷ On the other hand, wisdom works. Wisdom wins. The wise decision leads to the best outcome – certainly in light of forever.

B. It is worth asking if you are growing in wisdom. Remember, we do not have to grow wise. We grow old without effort. Wisdom takes work and many do not engage in the work.

C. So, wisdom is moral, but it’s more than that. Wisdom is also skill for decisions that are not moral – which is what we face much of the time. If a decision is moral it is often easy to decide.

1. One of the things that motivated me to study the future was the realization that we were outrunning our ethical headlights.

D. But moral decisions are not always hard to decipher. (They may be hard to follow, but they are not always hard to discern).

E. It’s worth noting that Daniel and his friends made some decisions that we might not make: they agree to embrace pagan names but not to eat pagan food. I could easily see myself doing the opposite.¹⁸

F. But wisdom goes beyond that. Wise people get good at making decisions that are not moral.

X. So how do we grow wise?

A. First: Seek God. By this I mean two things:

1. It starts as we study, meditate on and then apply wisdom from God.¹⁹ The Bible is our primary source for wisdom and we need a daily dose.

- a) Many of you are taking advantage of the daily readings that go with this series. In some ways they are just a tease. Let me note that I think one of the most spiritual transformative things you can do is spend ten minutes a day reading the Bible.
 - b) My plea is that you spend at least ten minutes a day reading the Bible and ten minutes a day in prayer. This is a minimum starting point. It's not too much to ask. Cut some things out. Really. This is square one. If you do those two things your life will change.
2. It continues as we apply it.
- a) Life works when we apply what God says. We gain wisdom as we lean into His counsel. That is what Hebrews says.²⁰
 - b) There is a natural and a supernatural element in play here.²¹
3. This is not the default path for today. We are told to look inside ourselves and do what is right. The Bible suggests something quite different.²²
- B. Second: Ask. Pray.
- 1. We see this on display with Daniel. After Daniel calmed the king down in chapter one by saying that he'd work on identifying and then interpreting his dream, he went back to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and said, "We need to pray."²³
 - 2. And James – Jesus's half-brother – opens his letter stating, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God."²⁴ The wisdom that leads to true and lasting happiness is not natural or inborn. It is supernatural. It is a gift of God. Therefore, if we would "get wisdom," we must pray.
 - 3. I've had next steps revealed that I would say, came from God. Not often. But occasionally.
- C. Third: Hang out with wise people.²⁵
- 1. This is what the Bible tells us to do. Proverbs 13 reads: He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers hard.
 - 2. We seldom rise above the level of our friends.
 - 3. We see that with young kids. It's no less true as we grow older.

4. The small groups we advocate are not an accident. We need each other. And we have to be more intentional about this because money and technology have the effect of making us more and more independent.

5. This is easy to see from where I sit. And it is also easy to see it's detrimental effects.

D. Four: Pay Attention

1. According to the Bible there are four types of people.

a) One: The naïve or simple.²⁶ They do not understand the consequences of their actions. They are not wicked, just clueless. Think – small children and also those who are too easily influenced by others.

b) Two: The fool. This is someone who is old enough to know better but has a pattern of making stupid or foolish decision, often because they do not learn by looking around. They appear not to care what others think. They seem determined to make every bad decision themselves – and even that is often not enough.²⁷

c) Three is the mocker. This is a fool who is working to drag others with him.²⁸

d) Finally, number four is the wise. The person who is clearly looking to embody godly character in very practical ways.

2. When you dig into the Book of Proverbs a few things start to come into focus.

a) Based on how many proverbs are written for fools, the suggestion seems to be that there are more fools than there are wise people or mockers.

b) Secondly, Solomon is not very optimistic that once we head down this path that we'll have the ability to turn things around. It can be done. People do it. People have success breaking out of addictions, overcoming bad habits, getting out of debt, turning from evil to do good. But it's hard and most do not do it.^{29, 30}

c) A third take-away from Proverbs is that we tend to give a pass to the naïve, but when you read Proverbs you realize that Solomon is desperately trying to communicate their need to "get wisdom" as quickly as possible. Because without it they are at great risk to get hurt. The fate of the simple and the fate of the fool is often the same.³¹

1. Let me pause here to ask: Which are you? And while we are here: what is the one thing you can do to move towards wisdom?

E. Number Five: Shine your headlights into eternity.

1. Wisdom is practical and moral; wisdom wins (it works). Number four: wisdom requires long-term thinking. It requires us to think about the future. And by this I do not just mean that:

2. If you are wise you will save for retirement.

3. Or, if you are wise you will do hard things now so that down the line things are easier

4. I mean, if you are wise you will live today in light of the next 10,000 years (and beyond).³², ³³ You will focus on God.

5. Where is your focus? We need to get a good diagnosis in order to get better. Where is your focus?

6. Failure to plan for the future is one of the hallmarks of the fool.³⁴

XI. I could go on, but let me move us forward. There are three things I want to be sure you've got at this point:

A. Biblical wisdom is available. It is not information gleaned from Siri or Google; it is not theoretical insights from arm-chair philosophers; it's not sage, religious advice. It is godly character lived in context.

B. We need wisdom to navigate the future.

C. This will take effort.³⁵ Spiritual growth does not happen by accident.

XII. Men and women, you can do this.

A. You can grow wise. But you are the only one who can make it happen. And every day there seems to be more and more focus on the immediate and less and less focus on the eternal.

B. The current and our broken hearts are pulling us towards now and easy. If you want to take ground you will have to work at this.

C. What is your next step?

1. If you are taking ground, stay the course

2. If Christianity is new to you, let me encourage you to make plans to attend Alpha
 3. If you are stalled, step it up.
 - a) I met with a guy this week. Very successful. Very nice. A series of big jobs. I hadn't seen him in a while. I asked him how he was doing spiritually. He said, "Not well." He said, "you spoke to me in a sermon just before we moved away. You said there are people who are stalled. That's me. My wife is doing better. I'm thinking that our average is pretty good. Will that work?"
 - b) My answer was, "No."
 4. If you need help getting unstuck, let us help. Sign up to meet with someone.
- D. At this moment I am going to turn things over to the campus pastor and we are going to pray.

XIII. Campus Pastor: Prayer for wisdom

XIV. Campus Pastor: At the end, Mike mentioned a few different camps that you might find yourself in.

- A. Some of you may be new to the Christian faith. And God is doing something in your heart. You know who you are. Alpha will be coming just around the corner.
- B. Some of you may need to talk with someone. I'm available for that. Just let me know. These meetings are confidential. It may be your best next step.
- C. And a meeting is also an option if you feel like you are stuck.
- D. **You can sign up online for these or**
- E. Men and women, your future involves God. I promise you that. There is path towards him that works, that is well traveled. He is inviting you to take some steps down it. Take a next step. Pursue the God who is pursuing you.

¹ I am holding in my hand a device that can tell me all kinds of things. Siri, what is the capital of Newfoundland? Siri, will it rain tomorrow? The technology is stunning. Mesmerizing even. But alas, Siri gets tripped up when the questions head down a different track. Siri, what is zero divided by zero? Or, "Siri, what is the meaning of life?" As a culture we have become pretty good at accessing information. It is expanding in every direction, but we can stay pretty current. "Siri, what did the Dow close at on Friday?" Obtaining knowledge – the ability to make sense of information – is a bit more of a challenge. "Siri, what should I do with that information?" Wisdom is different yet again. And that is what we want. Indeed, it is

what we need. For the record, wisdom is more than information, and it's even more than the ability to do something with that information. The Bible – which has a lot to say about wisdom, and which basically orders us to seek it – defines wisdom as godly character in action. The implication is that wisdom is what we need to live a good life, which is something smart people – high IQ people – are not always able to do. Sometimes entire groups of people seem to get it wrong. They get swept up in a cultural moment just like everyone else. It's only later that everyone asks, "what were we thinking?" We see something like that happening back in Babylon, but Daniel and his friends are wise enough to see through it.

² In a sermon a couple years ago, I mentioned that Clayton Christenson, a popular Harvard Business School professor, opened his book, *How Will You Measure Your Life*, by noting that after attending a handful of HBS reunions he was struck by the fact that a good number of the returning alumni had lives that were quite unpleasant. To be more specific, he noted that while many had been financially successful – sometimes accumulating tens if not hundreds of millions of dollars – their personal lives were a mess. They had often burned through several marriages, were estranged from their children and didn't have any good friends.²

³ We live in a culture where success is defined by words like: fast, new, big, or power, money and fame. God uses words like: peace, joy and self-control. We live in a world where sound bites rule and everyone is quite confident that they are right. The Book of Proverbs celebrates those that are thoughtful, reflective and humble.

⁴ It is likely that a big part of their education was to learn Aramaic. Daniel begins in Hebrew but switches to Aramaic – which was the international language with Babylon in power.

⁵ Nebuchadnezzar appears to turn towards God as well, but in chapter 3 he will be back to his old ways and old beliefs.

⁶ Years ago I did a series on idols out of Acts 17, which tells us what happened when Paul showed up in Athens and saw the idolatry there – which included an altar to an unknown god. In it I argued that "today idols are seldom statues or totem poles. They are mostly good things promoted beyond their station. They are part of the creation that we invest with too much meaning. I then went on to suggest that if Paul showed up in downtown Chicago today and looked around, instead 1st century Athens, he would likely confront us over a bunch of small "g" gods that we do not think of as idols or small gods: money, sex, entertainment, technology, science, even the family. By the way, you can also look at Psalm 115:8; 135:5 and Jeremiah 10:8.

⁷ Music can certainly move us in powerful ways. And like any good gift, it has power that can be misused in equal measure. The bigger and better and more wonderful something was designed to be, the easier it is to be misused in a powerful way. Sex is the obvious example here. It has great upsides for joy and to facilitate unity and bonding between a man and a woman who are committed to each other. And it has the ability to wreak havoc and wreck lives.

⁸ The suggestion is that Nebuchadnezzar appears to be leveraging the psychological effect of the music.

⁹ There is much to learn here about Christian faithfulness. Samuel Rutherford wrote, "Duties are ours, events are the Lord's." It is our job to be faithful. It is the Lord's job to decide in His good providence how things will work out.

¹⁰ In the first week I noted that the Bible is a book about Jesus. Please note, the suggestion is that it is Jesus in his pre-incarnate state (Jesus before he took on a body) that is in the furnace with them. I heard Mark Barnett – one of today's successful TV producers – say that when he made the series on the Bible, which he had to fight to do because the studio execs wanted him to only do the Old Testament, which can

all be played off in an action-adventure way. Anyway, when he made the Bible series he used the same actor here for Jesus because he wanted to drive home that point.

¹¹ Forest Gump said, “Stupid is as stupid does.” He had a low IQ, but his mother helped him understand that he if he made good choices he wasn’t stupid. The same works in reverse: “Wisdom is as wisdom does.”

¹² In his book, *Why Smart People Can Be So Stupid* (Yale, 2002), Dr. Sternberg delineates four reasons why smart people often make a mess of their lives: 1) they are self-centered; 2) they think they understand everything; 3) they act as if they have both insight and power; 4) they think they are immune to consequences. Sternberg suggests that they need more understanding and perhaps a course on ethics. The Bible would suggest such people need to repent.

¹³ This is a point I tried to make to the 14 year old who lives in our house. One day, on a whim, he decided to memorize pi to 75 places past the decimal point. Which led Sheri and I to ask, “Why?” Since I stopped doing story problems in high school I don’t think I’ve ever needed to know pi. And if it ever do, I’m sure 3.14 will be just fine. And secondly to marvel that anyone who could memorize pi to 75 places could consistently forget to put the milk away.

¹⁴ The definition is from Mark Labberton, Fuller.Edu/TNN, Spring 2011. These other statements concerning wisdom deserve reflection: 1) To have wisdom is to have competence in how life really works. Timothy Keller; 2) You only know as much as you do. Francis of Assisi.; 3) Wisdom is the power to see and the inclination to choose the best and highest goal, together with the surest means of attaining it. J.I. Packer; 4) A wise man learns by the experience of others. An ordinary man learns by his own experience. A fool learns by nobody’s experience; 5) In seeking wisdom thou art wise; in imagining that thou has attained it thou art a fool. Rabbi Ben Azai

¹⁵ There are several points to make here: 1) When you dig into the biblical text conversations about wisdom can become complicated pretty quickly because there are a number of different Greek and Hebrew words in play here – and different translation teams use different English terms (wisdom, knowledge, understanding) to distinguish them, but they do not always use the same terms. Therefore, some scholars argue “wisdom and knowledge are different” while the Biblical text may use them synonymously. My point here is simply: the Greeks were theoretical and the Jews were practical. 2) I remember years ago hearing that the Greeks were smarter and had the superior culture, but the Romans were better warriors so we ended up with the Roman Empire, which was all Greek culture but Roman leaders. And 3) Part of the reason for the differences between the two stems from their different starting points. For the Greeks wisdom grew out of philosophical reflection. They questioned the existence of God, so they started with their own ideas before eventually arguing for an impersonal Unmoved Mover behind everything. Hebrew wisdom – i.e., that which is found in the Bible – starts with the self-revelation of the God who created all things. In “What is Biblical Wisdom?” (*TableTalk*, ??), the issue is explained this way: “By questioning the existence of God and by fashioning a god out of their own intellects, the Greeks always operated in the realm of idolatry, however sophisticated they might have been in expressing it. Hebrew wisdom operated wholly in the realm of worship. Why is Hebrew wisdom so practical? Because the fundamental questions have already been answered in God’s revelation. Why is biblical wisdom so concrete and concerned with daily affairs? Because God created all things and is interested in every aspect of our lives. Why is Hebrew wisdom adorned in a semi-poetic style? Because the writers of this wisdom literature were confident about their position in God’s world, and thus were enabled to celebrate it in beauty. Proverbs 1:7 says that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. The Greeks never even got to this beginning point...” Wisdom is quite different from knowledge. Pay attention because I am about to try to lose you. In your English Bible the terms knowledge and wisdom are often used interchangeably. There are a number of different Hebrew words in play here. The translators are doing their best. It’s tricky because some of this is poetry. Just know this, understanding and wisdom are quite different. If you know but do not do you are not wise, you are a fool; and 4) this focus on the practical is quite Jewish. The Greeks were known for their philosophy – the word is a combination of *phileo* – one of the Greek words for love, and *sophia* – which means wisdom. The Greeks loved talking about ideas and concepts. They took a lot of pride in the writings of Plato and Socrates. But for them, knowledge was abstract, esoteric and conceptual. The Hebrews were different. They were practical. For them, wisdom was concrete. It was all about life skills. In fact, the Hebrew word for wisdom (*chakam*) means “skillful living.”

¹⁶ According to Prasad Kaipa and Navi Radjou, who write in *Forbes*, “Smartness is like a wild horse: riding it can be exhilarating for a while until you are thrown from it. To tame and harness smartness for the long run, you need wisdom – the stuff that gives you ethical clarity and a sense of purpose.” I do not like all that they advocate, but I think their distinction here is helpful.

¹⁷ As an aside, one of the reasons it’s not wise is that one bad decision usually leads to another. God is not a cranky prude looking down from heaven trying to find someone having fun so he can say, “Stop that!” He is a loving, gracious Father trying to protect those he loves. And so when he sees someone doing something stupid he says, “That’s going to bite you. That’s the wrong path. It’s going to lead to trouble.”

¹⁸ The situation here is multifaceted. For starters, they may have had no choice in what people called them, whereas they found a way to not eat what they were being offered because of Leviticus 11 and the likelihood that the food was associated with heathen worship. (See also 1 Cor. 8-10).

¹⁹ In Psalm 19:7 we read: "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." And here I would advocate not just faithful Bible study, but also regular reading of great books.

²⁰ Hebrews 5:14; Romans 1:18ff; Psalm 119:9-11.

²¹ We should not lose overlook the fact that Daniel is not surprised by Israel's fall to Bablyon. It made sense to him both because of the prophecy to that end but also because of Israel's apostasy.

²² In a blog post based on a sermon by Tim Keller, Paul VanderKlay writes: Tim referenced Jerome Kagan a developmental psychologist who did work on temperaments. He referenced an article in The Atlantic. This one seems to be it from 1994. The title of the article is "How We Become What We Are" . There is also a good piece in the [Boston Globe](#) by Kagan on the same subject.

We are wired to respond to threats in three different ways:

- 1 Flight: to be anxious and withdraw from perceived threats
- 2 Fight: to be aggressive with perceived threats.
- 3 Philosophical: to try to calm down and patiently evaluate a perceived threat.

Each approach is best depending on the nature of the threat. It takes training in wisdom to learn how to evaluate threats.

Because these are temperaments, it is important to train children to evaluate threats otherwise they will simply respond according to their temperament.

The culture is also against us. The culture says "be yourself". Well, sometimes your innate temperament will lead you wrong.

CS Lewis "The Abolition of Man": The ancients saw man's need to conform himself to reality by sometimes doubting himself and learning virtue and wisdom. Today we see the problem as how to subdue reality to our will and the answer is technique.

²³ We also see references to seeking God for insight in other parts of the book: 1:9 Now God had caused...; 1:17 God gave knowledge...; 2:19 During the night (while he was praying) the mystery was revealed; 2:21 God gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning; 2:23 You have given me wisdom and power; 2:28 but there is a God in heaven who reveal mysteries

²⁴ See: 1) Re: Solomon, see I Kings 3:11said, "Because you have asked this and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, behold now I do according to your word;" 2) Re: Daniel, see Daniel 2:30, "To thee, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for thou hast given me wisdom and strength, and hast made known to me what we asked of thee;" 3) See also Col. 1:9 & Eph. 1:17 for Paul. and " (2:23). And we have seen how Paul prayed that the churches might be given "spiritual wisdom" (Colossians 1:9) and that they might have "a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of God" (Ephesians 1:17).

²⁵ One of the ways we can hang out with wise people is to read their books. Find an author that you connect with and go deep. Read their works interactively.

²⁶ See Pr. 7:6-27

²⁷ Prov. 1 says the fool delights in ignorance; In Prov. 7 we see that the simple person is duped by the seductress. They were not looking for trouble. However the fool knows exactly what is happening and is out waiting. Prov. 15 says the fool scorns the advice of others and trust their own insight

²⁸ Dan Allender, Tremper Longman and Henry Cloud make distinctions between those who are wise, those who are foolish and those who are plain evil. Allender argues that the difference between a fool and someone who is evil is one of degrees. "In many respects, an evil person is simply a more severe fool. Who has progressed to a level of foolishness that is deeply severed from human emotion or goodness." (Bob Merritt, Get Wise, Baker, 2014). P. 95.

²⁹ But in Prov. 27:22 we see that he holds out little hope for fools. That passage reads: Though you grind a fool in a mortar, grinding them like grain with a pestle, you will not remove their folly from them. Clearly, we want to turn from foolishness as soon as we can, because every day we live that life, the harder it is to become wise.

³⁰ Henry Cloud writes, "People stop bad patterns every day; they turn their affairs around every day; they move out of bad relationships every day; they overcome addictions every day; they get on better paths every day. (Merritt, p. 77). But it is hard. Not long ago a friend of mine got addicted to pain killers and I was surprised how quickly it happened and how hard it was for him to climb out of the hole. It's not easy to change course. But it can be done.

³¹ The fate of the simple and the fate of the fool is the same. It will not end well for either of them. If you want life to work – if you want to survive the future - "get wisdom." Study the Book, study life, learn from others. There is a path that works and among the basic dictums are: don't lie, don't have an affair, don't envy, get your temper under control, avoid debt, don't gossip, stop sleeping in and on and on it goes.

³² In Psalm 90, Moses prayer in which he asks God to "teach him to number his days so that he could develop a heart of wisdom."

³³ Solomon uses a variety of Hebrew words for wisdom. One of them is used (*'orma*) is used to describe Satan. It means shrewdness or discretion. (Gen. 3:1: "Now the serpent was more crafty [*'orma*] than any of the other animals the Lord had made.") It's not an inherently bad word. Its true meaning is the ability to look ahead. To make plans. If you're forming plans for the good of others then this is a good word. If you are working out how to rob a bank, then it's not. But it highlights the importance of long term thinking.) This is one of the reasons why there is often wisdom in the advice of seniors. They have learned from the mistakes of their short-term thinking and now see things differently. Of course, not all old people are wise. You do not get wise simply by getting old. You have to be paying attention. But one of the things we gain over time is perspective. And perspective allows us to see that some of what we used to think was wrong – that some of what we thought was important really wasn't and some things we didn't pay attention to were important. I don't want to imply that we are wise just because we are old or foolish just because we are young. But there is a correlation there and it's one more reason we should hesitate to drink too deeply from our culture, because it is enamored with youth.

³⁴ When I was working as a management consultant back in the 90s one of the things that eventually became obvious was that all of the information was in the hands of the 20 year olds. They were the ones who knew how to work the computers. The people who understood the business – who had some mileage on them, who had weathered some cycles and who had some perspective on how to treat people and how today's decisions would play out over time – they didn't understand computers and consequently were often left out of the loop. Maybe even let go. Which meant that what you had was people who had all sort of information and technical skills and maybe some level of smarts, but most

likely no wisdom. And I think you could make a case that some of the problems we have in the business world today is because of this – e.g., the focus on quarterly earnings to the demise of long term growth; the breakdown of the social contract between employers and employees.

³⁵ Wisdom is rare because it's hard to come by. Given a choice between sin and wisdom we will default to sin unless we have developed safeguards or character or convictions that lead us down the right path. In an ultimate example of irony and tragedy, Solomon's son, Rehoboam, is a classic fool. The book of Proverbs was written for him, and yet he ignores the counsel it offers – he ignores the insights of the wise and follows the impulses of the young and it costs him everything. A big part of the reason wisdom is uncommon is because it requires sacrifice and obedience – i.e., moral living requires short term pain. But it's the best path. We are never expected to act against our best interest. Rehoboam ignored wise counsel and was too stubborn to ever repent. In Antiquities (8.10.4), Josephus reports that Rehoboam remained "a proud and foolish man" who never recovered from the folly of his first political decision. The final word on him (2 Chr. 12:14) asserts, he did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the Lord."