

What do you do when you don't know what to do? Where do you turn when you don't know the answer to an important question?

Young people don't you love that question that everyone asks you:

- What are you going to do once you graduate from high school?
- What am I supposed to do with my life?
- What do I do now that this relationship has ended?
- I lost my job. What happened?
- What is the right thing to do with my business?
- What does life look like now that this illness has come into our family?
- My children are gone and I'm an empty nester. How do I live now?
- How do I go into retirement after working for 45 years?
- How do I pick up the pieces after the death of my loved one?

One thing you can do is seek out wisdom that will help you determine the next steps to take. But there are different types of wisdom to be found. Some wisdom is gained through years of experience. So we might turn to someone who has already gone through what we're going through. I remember when we were first parents how much we appreciated talking to people who were further down the path than we were. We can also find wisdom by talking to an expert. So if we have relationship struggles, you talk to an expert in resolving relationship struggles. Or if we need wisdom with our finances, we can talk to a financial expert to gain their wisdom. When it comes to questions about life, some people go on great quests to mountain tops so they can speak to a guru or wise man.

But there is some wisdom that is deeper than human experience or expertise. There are some questions that will not be answered by years of experience or study. This is especially true when life takes an unpredictable drastic turn or we suffer some great loss. We don't know where to turn in our suddenly disoriented state.

Job lived this. We've seen him suffer the stunning losses of his flocks, wealth and children on the same day. Yet he refused to curse God but fell down and worshipped. Then we saw Satan afflict Job's health. Job still refused to curse God. He rebuked his wife for suggesting such a thing and instead resolved to accept good and trouble from God. Job's

three friends arrive with an intention to comfort him. They sit with him for 7 days in silence. Job finally breaks the silence. He is NOT okay. He curses the day of his birth. He wonders why he didn't die at birth. And he laments his misery. He looks for an explanation. He needs some wisdom to put all that's happened into some kind of perspective.

Last week we saw the first cycle of dialogue between Job and his friends. Eliphaz speaks first. He sees the world governed by the retribution principle. If you are good you will receive blessings from God. If you are bad, you will receive trouble and God's punishment. Eliphaz concludes that since bad things have happened to Job, there must be unconfessed sin in his life. Job knows he is innocent. We know Job is innocent. So Job rejects this counsel. But the cycles of speeches go around and around. Job's friends become more intense in their accusations. Job becomes more emotional in his defense.

Finally, in Job 26 and 27, Job has had it with his friends counsel. He cuts off his friend's speech and looks to plead his case directly to God. In Job 29-31, Job will present his case. In 29, Job remembers the bounty and honor he once enjoyed. In chapter 30, he describes his current state of dishonor, pain, abandonment and suffering. In chapter 31, Job defends his innocence to plead his case before the Almighty. But in between Job's final dismissal of his friends and his defense before God, we have chapter 28.

It first seems out of place. We go from the desperate emotional struggle between Job and his friends to a calm, reasoned discussion on wisdom. Why is this here? Maybe narrator inserted Job 28. It's like he's saying "we've heard 22 of chapters of debate about the retribution principle and it's gotten us nowhere. Now let's step back, take a breath and think about what we really need here – wisdom."

But it could be Job speaking. After struggling through several discussions with his friends, he realizes that he needs wisdom beyond what they currently have. And there are times in the midst of great trials where those suffering have moments or times of calm. They see things clearly for a while. Then they continue to struggle. I'm going to assume these are Job's words. But whatever the origin of this chapter, we have today a wise poem about wisdom. It answers the question we occasionally ask in life – Where can we find the deepest wisdom? This chapter takes us on a short quest that ends with a somewhat surprising discovery.

### **Where can we find the deepest wisdom?**

[1] "Surely there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold that they refine. [2] Iron is taken out of the earth, and copper is smelted from the ore. [3] Man puts an end to darkness and searches out to the farthest limit the ore in gloom and deep

darkness. [4] He opens shafts in a valley away from where anyone lives; they are forgotten by travelers; they hang in the air, far away from mankind; they swing to and fro. [5] As for the earth, out of it comes bread, but underneath it is turned up as by fire. [6] Its stones are the place of sapphires, and it has dust of gold. [7] “That path no bird of prey knows, and the falcon's eye has not seen it. [8] The proud beasts have not trodden it; the lion has not passed over it. [9] “Man puts his hand to the flinty rock and overturns mountains by the roots. [10] He cuts out channels in the rocks, and his eye sees every precious thing. [11] He dams up the streams so that they do not trickle, and the thing that is hidden he brings out to light.

Job begins with a description of mining. It was a very important industry in the ancient world. The mined materials were used for practical and artistic purposes. He mentions silver, gold, iron, copper and sapphire. These jewels often formed a key part of a person or kingdom's wealth. But the actual process of mining remained a mystery to most people. Job points to this in verse 4. Mining was done in valleys away from where people lived. Miners would swing to and from while they were lowered into shafts but hardly anyone sees this.

Then in verse 7 and 8 Job refers to the falcon and lion. They seem out of place in a discussion about mining. The falcon was celebrated for its vision and the lion for its courage. But the falcon could not see into the mine. The lion's courage does not take it deep underground. There is no evidence of mines started by falcons or lion. Mining requires deep delving in dark, obscure places. It produces stunning products like sapphire, gold and silver from what looks like dust and rock. Through mining man brings hidden jewels to light.

But what does all this have to do with the quest for wisdom? Job answers this for us in verse 12 with a question. “But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?” Man shows great ingenuity and ability in mining, but he cannot find wisdom. **Where can we find the deepest wisdom? Not through hard work and technology.**

Man can discover some great things. But he cannot unearth the deepest wisdom. Yet with all the advances in technology, medicine and science we can conclude that if we just work hard enough or research deep enough, we can discover the deepest wisdom or why things work like they do. I was listening to an interview with skeptic Michael Shermer, editor of Skeptic magazine. He describes himself as a former Christian who was hard core into the 1970's born again movement. But then he majored in science and concluded there is no evidence for God. When asked about how he would explain the origins of the universe he argued that even if there was a God that created planets and universes (and I quote) “that's just an engineering problem. God is just a scaled up version of us. He would be like a supercomputer that is omnipotent and all powerful.” So in a way it's like Shermer says we will eventually be able to do

what a so called God would do. We can achieve that through our own hard work and technological advance we will be able to create like He created. By extension we will discover the deepest wisdom therefore our efforts & advances. But Job disagrees. Man works hard and takes great risks. Man can overcome great obstacles through technological advance. But he still cannot find this deep wisdom.

So Job considers another possibility.

[12] “But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? [13] Man does not know its worth, and it is not found in the land of the living. [14] The deep says, ‘It is not in me,’ and the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’ [15] It cannot be bought for gold, and silver cannot be weighed as its price. [16] It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx or sapphire. [17] Gold and glass cannot equal it, nor can it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold. [18] No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal; the price of wisdom is above pearls. [19] The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, nor can it be valued in pure gold.

Where can we find the deepest wisdom? **(12-19) It cannot be bought by human wealth.** Job looks at a variety of sources of wealth. But he gives away his conclusion before he even gets to the wealth. Verse 13 – Man does not know it’s worth. It is not found in the land of the living.” So he’s already concluded that it won’t be found on earth. So maybe it will be found in the waters. But if he could ask the deep, it would answer “wisdom is not in me.” And if you could ask the sea, it would answer “it’s not with me.”

Then he proceeds through various items of wealth in the ancient world. Can wisdom be obtained through purchase? Job declares it cannot be bought with gold or silver; not with jewels like onyx or sapphire. Wisdom cannot be equaled by gold or glass. It’s beyond coral and crystal. It’s more precious than pearls. None of them can buy wisdom.

Yet a lot of people believe that anything can be bought if you have enough money. The uber wealthy buy islands, helicopters, security forces and even governments. But Job argues they still don’t have enough to obtain this deep wisdom. So now it’s time to end the quest. Verses 20-27.

[20] “From where, then, does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding? [21] It is hidden from the eyes of all living and concealed from the birds of the air. [22] Abaddon and Death say, ‘We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.’ [23] “God understands the way to it, and he knows its place. [24] For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. [25] When he gave to the wind its weight and apportioned the waters by measure, [26] when he made a decree for the rain and a way for the lightning of the thunder, [27] then he saw it and declared it; he established it, and searched it out

**Where can we find the deepest wisdom?**

**(20-27) God alone has and is this wisdom;**

The poem moves towards its end with a restatement of the question. “From where, then, does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding?” It is not found by hard work and technological advancement. It cannot be bought with the finest jewels or the greatest wealth. Verse 21. It is hidden from all living eyes and concealed from the birds of the air. This wisdom that Job seeks is not just out there to be discovered. And even if you could ask “Disaster and Death” about wisdom, they could only answer “We have heard a rumor about it with our ears.” So this wisdom cannot be found on the earth. It cannot be found under the earth. It cannot be found in the sea or death. It cannot be found in the underworld. Where is it?

Verse 23. “God understands the way to it and he knows its place.” This answers the question posed by verse 20. “From where, then, does wisdom come? God understands the way to it. Where is the place of understanding? God knows its place.” We would expect that God would lead Job on path that would take him to the place of this wisdom.

But instead we are led to God himself. “For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.” God can see the entire earth and everything under the heavens. Okay, that’s good. Now God show us the path that leads to the place of wisdom. But we don’t get a place or path in verses 25-27. We get a description of God doing his work it seems at creation. God gave wind its weight. God measured the waters. God makes decrees about the rain and a way for lightning and thunder. Then look at verse 27. Then he saw it and declared it; he established it and searched it out.” “It” is wisdom.

So wisdom is found in the decisions made in the original arrangement of the cosmos. Wisdom is found in God’s ordering of the universe. Wisdom is seen in God’s work of bringing order to the chaos in creation. This wisdom is foundational to the working of the world. This is part of what the book of Job teaches. Job and his friends believed the world worked according to the retribution principle with justice as the foundation. But this poem leads us to conclusion that the world works according to God’s deep wisdom. It is found only in God and man can only obtain it if God chooses to reveal it to us.

God does not lead us on a path to a place where we can find His treasure room of wisdom. God leads Job and us to Himself and His works. He points us to His creation and the order found in it. Such order displays the deep wisdom of God.

**So how do we find and discover wisdom? (28)**

The poem concludes by explaining how humans can connect with wisdom.

[28] And he said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'" (Job 28 ESV)

This is another unexpected twist. Job sought a path to wisdom and place where understanding could be found. But instead he is given instruction on an attitude and behavior. "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom." Now look at that closely. Does that statement promise us that we will obtain God's wisdom? Does it lead us to believe that we can find God's treasure cave of wisdom? Does it promise that God will explain what's going on in our sufferings and tough situations? No. It simply directs us to wise attitude. You wanted to find wisdom. Well fear the Lord. That is wisdom. It is wise to fear the Lord.

But what does it mean to fear the Lord? I would define it positively as "respectful awe of His power and might." One commentator describes it as knee knocking fear that one feels in the presence of a vastly more powerful though thoroughly kind person. But I really like how John Walton defines fear of the Lord. He writes "fearing the Lord means to take him seriously."

If someone could examine your life from this past week, would they conclude that you take the Lord seriously? Or do you think God is detached from your life – so you can ignore him? Do you maybe think He's incompetent so you scorn Him? Do you think him limited or powerless? So then you feel comfortable scorning Him. Maybe you think He's corrupt and worthy of rebuke? Maybe you think He's shortsighted and needs your advice or petty and needs to be resented.

Someone who takes God seriously invests time and effort in paying attention to all He's revealed about Himself. They discover who God is according to the Scriptures. They don't impose on Him their own expectations. They prayerfully and humbly discover what He has revealed about himself. Even Job who did fear God had a deficient view of him. He is unwilling to give God the benefit of the doubt. He thinks God is lacking in some way. Job will present his case for innocence before God in chapter 31. It seems Job concludes that if God doesn't answer, Job has proved his innocence and God has somehow failed to be just. Fearing God means we take Him as the God revealed to us in the Bible and in Christ and in creation. Do you want to find wisdom? Well take God seriously. That is wise.

But we also can gain understanding by turning away from evil. In living faithfully before God, understanding is found. This is no appeasement action. "I'm going to turn away from evil. Then God will bless me and even owes me

because I've been good." No, it's turning away from evil leads to understanding. It doesn't promise understanding of our circumstances. It is an understanding that God is deeper and wider and still has His purposes. We are not promised a pathway to discover the hidden order of the heart of the universe. Wisdom means to live by faith, not by sight, bowing before the Creator and looking at him alone. **The quest for wisdom leads to fearing the Lord and turning away from evil.**

But how does this help us when life has gone terribly wrong? John Walton lays out a practical approach to this when we struggle in life. What does fearing the Lord and turning away from evil look like when life has gone terribly wrong?

1. Trust God rather than blame him or make demands of him for explanations.
2. Trust God for strength to endure.
3. Don't expect it all to make sense.
4. Channel resentment toward the fallenness of the world, not the God who has given all to initiate its redemption.
5. Resist giving in to the temptation to believe that you could run this world better than God does.
6. Above all, trust that he is wise.

But when you are in the midst of something desperate or difficult or devastating, these are not 6 easy steps to a happy and whole life. They are handles we grab onto to keep us from falling until we are strong enough to take the next step. To help us understand this, let's hear from Kelly Lemon about this.

*JOHN WALTON WRITES - IT IS ONE THING to construct a bullet-point list of theoretical strategies and advice. It is entirely different when life is a mess. Does it really work? I wanted to get Kelly's perspective on it.*

*JHW: Kelly, as you read Job 28 and reflect on the list, what makes sense and what doesn't? Have any of these worked for you as you have tried to struggle through your circumstances?*

*Kelly: After reading Job 28 and meditating on the meaning of the text and then reading the list I think to myself there is so much depth and truth in each point on the list. But how do I convey to the reader the magnitude of each step without appearing clichéd? I guess I can start with stating that when I look at this list, I think every point is a great step on the path towards wisdom, but so many of these points seem almost impossible without God's power.*

*I know if I had looked at this list in times of deep disappointment, I would want to trust God and have strength, not demand an explanation, or not have resentment. But I would feel helpless and feel as though I did not have the power to do so. When you are in a place of brokenness, you desire to feel close to God, to trust him and his will, but so many times*

*the cycle of destructive thoughts wins the battle and brings you back to a place of frustration. Well, I shouldn't say frustration, because I was once told that "frustration" is a secondary emotion to either anger or sadness. So I guess it is more accurate to state that when destructive thoughts won the battle over wisdom, it brought me back to a place of sadness. So I think a key component to following these points as you seek wisdom is first and foremost to pray and ask God to help you each step of the way. Now as clichéd as that might sound, the power of prayer is vital, especially during a period of great suffering.*

*I remember distinctly when I started to heal and get back on my own two feet, while still dealing with the same trials and pain, I had to let go fully of any type of control, which also relates to point 5, because it was not going to be by my strength or power that I was going to get through this. So if you are angry with God, turn to him and start approaching him—even in your anger. Start spending time in the Word and making time for the Lord, to get to a place where you can reach the goal of point 4, "Channel resentment toward the fallenness of the world, not the God who has given all to initiate its redemption." So I think what makes sense to me is making point 4 the first point on the list. I don't believe that you can get to a place of fully trusting God if you have not first dealt with your anger and resentment toward him. After getting to a place where you have realized that your anger needs to be channeled toward the fallenness in our world, you can begin the process of fully trusting him.*

*So pursuing wisdom in light of my trials started with praying for the power to do so: praying for the power to trust God and for the strength to endure, to let go of control, and to realize you can't run the world; and praying for faith and trusting that he is wise.*

*For me, when I am in this process of struggling with my circumstances and trying to trust God, I have had a hard time with the second part of point 1, to not "make demands of him for explanations." We know God can bring good from our suffering, but it is important to differentiate between having hope that God has a reason and purpose, and being content not knowing what it is. This is the process of simply trusting that God is good and wise rather than demanding the reason, or manufacturing a reason to "satisfy our desire for coherency."*

*What do you do when you don't know what to do? We need God. We don't have to know or understand everything. To find this wisdom, we must ultimately turn to God. We must take him seriously and turn away from the evil we've been dabbling with. When we do, God runs to us like the father in the prodigal son story.*



That beautiful scene was made possible in our lives because of Jesus' sacrifice for us. God demonstrated His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. The person who receives Christ has their sin paid for and forgiven. They walk in newness of life. This life of God comes into us and we are spiritually born again as Christ comes to live in us.

When Christ comes in, listen to what also comes in. Colossians 2:1-3 "For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Christ is the wisdom of God to those who are called.

Every day of our lives, we may quiet our discouragement with the comfort that comes from the knowledge of God's infinite wisdom: if we are his children, we can know that he is working wisely in our lives, even today, to bring us into greater conformity to the image of Christ.