



# Knowledge UNDERSTANDING Wisdom

*Our Lord calls for a continued application of the mind to His Word. A disciple does not dabble in learning. He makes the pursuit of an understanding of God's Word a chief business of his life. R.C. Sproul*

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. Proverbs 1:7  
At first glance, it seems that the authors of the Bible use the words “wisdom,” “knowledge,” and “understanding,” almost interchangeably. A closer examination shows a difference in the way the three terms are used.

In the Bible they are defined as:

- **Knowledge** – the facts (Proverbs 9:10, Proverbs 18:15, Colossians 2:8, 1 Timothy 2:4).
- **Understanding** – ability to translate meaning from the facts (Psalm 119:130, Proverbs 3:5-7, 18:2)
- **Wisdom** – knowing what to do next, given an understanding of the facts and circumstances (Ecclesiastes 8:1, James 3:17).

Those with **knowledge** are able to collect, remember, and access information. But, it is possible to have knowledge and lack understanding and wisdom. Someone might have the facts, but not know what they mean or what to do next.

Those with **understanding** are able to extract the meaning out of information. They “see through” the facts to the dynamics of what, how, and why. Understanding is a lens which brings the facts into crisp focus and produces principles.

Those with **wisdom** know which principle to apply in a given context. Understanding without wisdom can appear contradictory (Proverbs 26:4-5). For example, the statement, “He who hesitates is lost,” is true, but so is the idea that “haste makes waste.” Which principle to use depends on the context. Those with wisdom know what actions to take next. They do the right thing in the given situation. In contrast, there are many who have great knowledge and understanding but who consistently do the wrong thing.

Charles Spurgeon once wrote,

*Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. To know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal, and are all the greater fools for it. There is no fool so great a fool as a knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom.*

The New Testament word “disciple” literally means “a learner.” Christians are called to a careful study of the Bible. This will help us acquire the knowledge that we need in order to do what God has called us to do. Jesus said,

*If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free (John 8:31–32).*

R.C. Sproul writes in one daily devotional that,

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