AWE-INSPIRATION

The gift of redemption was given as hope for humanity. Through the gift of Jesus Christ, salvation for anyone who believes in Him is available (John 3:16). Redemption was also part of God’s system of education. Deception prevented Adam and Eve from trusting God—the foundational principle of true education. Satan’s deception would have continued a downward spiral, leading us to think that we could do something to cover up our own shame, nakedness, and sin or that we could do something to fix our catastrophic sin problem. But the gift of Christ also served as the antidote to cure the mind to base reality, not on a worldview that had the tendency to deceive us, but on the eternal Word of God. The Bible restarts this education process in us by insisting that we “do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

Despite humanity’s fall and the complications of sin, one of the most awe-inspiring aspects of God is His ability to remain the same. His character and His wisdom are unaffected. Even after the fall of Adam and Eve, God does not change His plan or expectations for the human race; He does not alter His requirements (in other words, the law) for the human family. Paradoxically, what is just as awe-inspiring is how God redeems fallen humanity and how much God does change to save fallen humanity. To understand these things means entering into the realm of the wisdom of God—a level that is higher than the highest human thought, and one that He asks us to reach by His power.
Write out Job 28:12–21 from the translation of your choice. You may also re-write the passage in your own words, outline, or mind-map the chapter.
INVALUABLE AND UNREACHABLE

In one of the most fascinating ways, Job 28:12–21 describes God’s wisdom and the futility of human endeavor to obtain it outside of Him. Job does this by pointing out two things: (1) the value of wisdom, and (2) the hiddenness of its source. The ultimate purpose of this passage shows that God’s ideal for us is (1) beyond human estimate and (2) beyond human intellectual, physical, and spiritual ability. The first is the limit of our potential to understand, while the second is the limitation of our actual understanding. This chapter in Job concludes with the comforting thought that in God, what was once impossible without Him becomes totally attainable by Him (Job 28:28).

Its Worth

From verses 15–17, gold is mentioned four times and in four various forms. The first word in verse 15, segore, occurs only twice in the Bible (the other is in Hosea 13:8). In verse 16, Job refers to the gold (kethem) of Ophir, which is often translated as fine gold. Verse 17 mentions gold (zahab) with glass or crystal in the beginning of the verse and fine gold (paz) at the end—the first is widely mentioned in the Bible, more than three hundred times, while the latter is mentioned less than ten times. The former denotes the golden color, while the latter refers to refined gold.

Job uses four different words for gold to refer to the worth of wisdom. The passage states that what God requires of us is unattainable and priceless. The value of God’s ideal for His children could not be purchased with any form of gold, whether it be common, special, rare, refined, or the purest gold of all. This wisdom that is not common, but rather religious in its affairs and salvific in its nature, is not for sale—it exceeds all estimable value.

Its Place

Even if, for the sake of argument, someone had what it takes to purchase this wisdom that leads to salvation, another challenge confronts us: the place where this wisdom resides is unapproachable. Job seeks to explain that no one knows where this wisdom is or where it came from; it has carefully hidden itself from our eyes and may as well be higher than the highest bird can fly.

Some believe that the Rüppell’s griffon vulture is the highest-flying bird in the world, reaching heights of nearly 40,000 feet in the air! Speaking of the unreachable heights of God’s wisdom, Job says that it is concealed even from the birds of the air that, in some cases, are able to fly as high as commercial airliners. “It is hidden from the eyes of all living” (Job 28:21) means that if it were possible to combine all human intelligence to seek out the location of this wisdom, the search would be in vain.

“Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding” (Job 28:28). Although God’s ideal for us is above the highest human thought and more costly than silver, gold, or precious rubies, it is attainable through “fear of the Lord.”
THE GOSPEL OF FEAR

The fear of God finds its context in the everlasting gospel as expressed in the book of Revelation. “Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of His judgment has come, and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of waters’ ” (Revelation 14:6, 7).

Rarely do we equate fear with wisdom. Even more rare is it to suggest that fear is more precious than gold and more unreachable than the birds of the air. The beloved disciple of Jesus famously said, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18). Yet the everlasting gospel in Revelation 14 calls God’s people to fear Him.

More than twenty passages in Scripture speak to the fear of God and wisdom. What did Bible writers mean when they encouraged us to fear God? We must first note two types of fear—one that should be embraced and the other rejected.

The Bible commends Moses as a person of faith because “he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:27). In this case, Moses was unfazed by the present reality that endangered his life. Instead, because he had seen the invisible God, the visible danger before him did not frighten him.

In Leviticus 19:3, God counseled His people, “Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father.” Some Bible versions translate “revere” as “fear.” This kind of fear is not inspired by frightful circumstances or an inability to see God. Instead, it is obedience to the commandment of God, “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you” (Ex. 20:12).

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom because it admits several important things about God and about the human condition. Although fearing God implies standing in awe of who He is and reverently obeying Him because He is the great Creator of heaven and earth, it also recognizes the various beautiful nuances of His character. In the next section, notice the various texts and see how they connect with the fear of God in order to gain a more complete picture of the beauty of fearing God.
inSpect

What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

The Fear of Obedience
(Deut. 6:2)

The Fear of Godliness
(Deut. 10:12, 20)

The Fear of Satisfaction
(Psalm 34:9)

The Fear of Trust
(Psalm 115:11)

What other verses come to mind about fear and wisdom?

Review your memorized verse from Job 28:12–21.
THE WISDOM FROM ABOVE

The Bible not only speaks of two types of fear, but it also speaks of two types of wisdom. In referencing the heavenly wisdom, James says, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” (3:17). James contrasts this with a human wisdom that leads to bitter envying, self-seeking in the heart, boasting, and lies—a wisdom that he calls “earthly, sensual, demonic” (3:14, 15).

Thus, Proverbs warns us: “Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil” (Prov. 3:7). Paul states: “Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise” (1 Cor 3:18). Human wisdom is deceptive. Divine wisdom is counterintuitive to human reasoning. The best advice Paul could give to the church at Corinth was to reverse its way of thinking from human logic to divine insight.

Paul goes on to say: “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, ‘He catches the wise in their own craftiness’; and again, ‘The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.’ Therefore let no one boast in men” (19–21). From God’s perspective, that which the natural mind of humanity considers to be wise is foolishness to Him.

In his second letter to the Corinthian church, Paul describes the fundamental problem with human wisdom. The tendency we have is to measure wisdom by comparing ourselves with one another (2 Cor. 10:12). This tendency leads us to envy when the other seems better, and pride when the other is not as good. It causes strife in the heart because we are at war with our brothers and sisters in Christ, and it ultimately makes each of us devilish in our greed for superiority. Thus, many a time have human beings totally exhausted their mental capacities to create great inventions out of selfish motivations to be better than others.

The only way to obtain that wisdom from above is to find the person of Jesus Christ “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). And the beauty of it all is that this invaluable and seemingly unreachable wisdom is actually very present and near us. When we find the wisdom of God hidden in His Son, we discover the most beautiful truth of all: the Wisdom that is from above exhausts His energy in knowing everything about us—His fallen, selfish children. “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it” (Ps. 139:6)!
**inSight**

Review the memory verse. How does it apply to your life this week?

After this week’s study of the chapter, what personal applications are you convicted of in your life in terms of attaining wisdom?

What practical applications must you make in education, family, career, and spiritual development?

---

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

“Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God’s ideal for His children. Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached. Before the student there is opened a path of continual progress. He has an object to achieve, a standard to attain, that includes everything good, and pure, and noble. He will advance as fast and as far as possible in every branch of true knowledge. But his efforts will be directed to objects as much higher than mere selfish and temporal interests as the heavens are higher than the earth.” (*Education*, 18–19)

“In these days much is said concerning the nature and importance of ‘higher education.’ The true ‘higher education’ is that imparted by Him with whom ‘is wisdom and strength’ (Job 12:13), out of whose mouth ‘cometh knowledge and understanding.’ Proverbs 2:6.

“In a knowledge of God all true knowledge and real development have their source. Wherever we turn, in the physical, the mental, or the spiritual realm; in whatever we behold, apart from the blight of sin, this knowledge is revealed. Whatever line of investigation we pursue, with a sincere purpose to arrive at truth, we are brought in touch with the unseen, mighty Intelligence that is working in and through all. The mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite. The effect of such communion on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate.” (*Education*, 14)

“He who co-operates with the divine purpose in imparting to the youth a knowledge of God, and molding the character into harmony with His, does a high and noble work. As he awakens a desire to reach God’s ideal, he presents an education that is as high as heaven and as broad as the universe; an education that cannot be completed in this life, but that will be continued in the life to come; an education that secures to the successful student his passport from the preparatory school of earth to the higher grade, the school above.” (*Education*, 19)

“The system of education instituted at the beginning of the world was to be a model for man throughout all aftertime. As an illustration of its principles a model school was established in Eden, the home of our first parents. The Garden of Eden was the schoolroom, nature was the lesson book, the Creator Himself was the instructor, and the parents of the human family were the students.

“Created to be ‘the image and glory of God’ (1 Corinthians 11:7), Adam and Eve had received endowments not unworthy of their high destiny. Graceful and symmetrical in form, regular and beautiful in feature, their countenances glowing with the tint of health and the light of joy and hope, they bore in outward resemblance the likeness of their Maker. Nor was this likeness manifest in the physical nature only. Every faculty of mind and soul reflected the Creator’s glory. Endowed with high mental and spiritual gifts, Adam and Eve were made but ‘little lower than the angels’ (Hebrews 2:7), that they might not only discern the wonders of the visible universe, but comprehend moral responsibilities and obligations.” (*Education*, 20)
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

How can Bible study practically address spiritual atrophy, spiritual lack of motivation and energy, spiritual hunger, and even spiritual death, where spiritual things no longer have any effect?

Describe the paradox of heavenly wisdom that is both unattainable and attainable.

What are creative ways to express the value of true wisdom when other comparisons fail?

How have the two fears been usually misunderstood?

What is the connection between finding Jesus and finding wisdom?

How does one reconcile current expectations in “higher education” and Ellen White’s perspective of “higher education”?

How can one yearn for this heavenly wisdom more? Do you?