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Ancient Words

*Holy words long preserved
For our walk in this world,
They resound with God's own heart,
Oh, let the ancient words impart.*

*Words of Life, words of Hope,
Give us strength, help us cope,
In this world, where e'er we roam,
Ancient words will guide us home.*

*Holy words of our Faith,
Handed down to this age.
Came to us through sacrifice,
Oh, heed the faithful words of Christ.*

*Holy words long preserved,
For our walk in this world.
They resound with God's own heart,
Oh, let the ancient words impart.*

*Refrain:
Ancient words ever true,
Changing me and changing you.
We have come with open hearts,
Oh, let the ancient words impart.*

*Ancient words ever true,
Changing me and changing you.
We have come with open hearts,
Oh, let the ancient words impart.*

Song by Michael W. Smith



**"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:
'The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the
key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who
shuts and no one opens.'" Revelation 3:7**



Seek Wisdom

Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev was the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1964 and chairman of the country's Council of Ministers from 1958 to 1964. It's been widely reported that Khrushchev memorized all four Gospels during his childhood, and once, during a speech in France in 1960, he even claimed to have been a "model pupil" in religion. In spite of this he had no qualms with supporting Joseph Stalin's purges and approving thousands of arrests. In 1938, Stalin sent him to govern the Ukrainian SSR, and he continued the purges there. Khrushchev may have known the gospels well, but he lacked the wisdom to apply them to his life.

In II Chronicles 1:10 Solomon asked God for wisdom. God not only granted him wisdom beyond anyone known before or after Solomon, God also gave him riches and honor. Solomon was not the only one God helped with wisdom. When the Israelites were carried into captivity, according to Daniel 1:20 when speaking of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, we are told, "As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm."

So, what exactly is wisdom? The dictionary describes it thus: Wisdom: the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment; the quality of being wise. Experience often comes with a bit of age. Mark Twain said, "Good decisions come from experience. Experience comes from making bad decisions." Knowledge, on the other hand, comes from seeking information.

If we want to be wise, we should first follow Solomon's example and ask of God. Proverbs 2:6 "For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding." If we are asking God for

wisdom, we must believe that He possesses that power and that wisdom is His to grant. Proverbs 1:7 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Faith is the foundation of all else God sets before us.



Beyond faith, we must seek knowledge of the word of God. We must know what His word teaches. Sin is the exact opposite of wise choices. Sin inflicts unbelievable pain in our everyday life. Sin also can eternally remove us from God’s presence. Scripture is designed to teach us how to avoid the pain of sin. When we learn all the teachings there, we come to realize scripture is truly the key to a happy life, which comes from making wise choices. God knew that from the beginning, and He has given us a pattern for life that assures us that with wise choices we avoid many of life’s heartaches and problems.

We, too, can have the gift of wisdom if we seek it in God’s word. Colossians 2:1-3 says: “²For I want you to know how great a struggle I have in your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, ²that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and that they would attain to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

By Wilburta Arrowood, Napoleonville, Louisiana



WISDOM

What is wisdom? James described it in James 3:17,¹⁷ *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable,*



gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

These attributes are totally different from

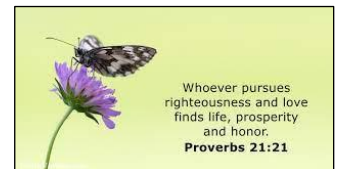
foolishness as Jesus described when He said, ²¹*For from within, out of the hearts of people, come the evil thoughts, acts of sexual immorality, thefts, murders, acts of adultery, ²²deeds of greed, wickedness, deceit,*

indecent behavior, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. ²³All these evil things come from within and defile the person,” Mark 7:21-23.

Solomon began his writing on the topic of gaining understanding in Proverbs 2:1-3, ¹*My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, ²making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding, yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, ⁴if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, ⁵then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.*

Adam showed no wisdom when he followed Eve into sin. Nadab and Abihu knew they were not to use foreign fire, but they foolishly used it anyway. Foolishness seems to come more easily and naturally to humans than does wisdom. Foolishness is an attribute many of us work hard to extinguish. But how do **we** extinguish foolishness?

Jesus said in Matthew 7:24, ²⁴*“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”* Ephesians 5:17 tells us to “¹⁷not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is.” Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:16, “¹⁶Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.” Proverbs 21:21 tells us to



“²¹pursue righteousness and kindness,” and Colossians 4:5 says, “⁵Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.”

How do we get wisdom? James wrote of wisdom in James 1:5, “⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.” Paul also wrote of it in Colossians 3:16, “¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Wisdom comes from God as we ask His guidance and take His word into our hearts.

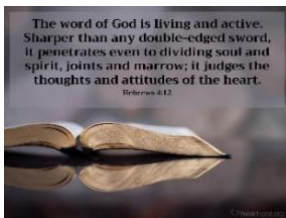
Solomon wrote of wisdom in Proverbs 4:5 ESV: “⁵Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.” In Proverbs 16:16 he wrote, “¹⁶How much better to get wisdom than gold! To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.” The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 111:10: “¹⁰The fear of the

LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!"

God blessed Solomon with great wisdom, 1 Kings 4:30: *"³⁰ Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt."* Even though he had such a gift from God, he was later misled by his numerous wives. Even though he wrote many words of wisdom in Proverbs, he was susceptible to the influence of women who worshiped foreign gods. God repeatedly warned the children of Israel against taking foreign wives who worshiped idols rather than the true God of Israel. It is never wise to disregard God's warnings.

A few years ago, one of our elders (Andy Cassidy) gave devotional thoughts on wisdom. His five points were:

1. God's creation speaks "...their words to the end of the earth." Romans 8:21-23; 10:18
2. Listen to the godly wisdom of other Christians.
3. Listen to Bible teaching – devotionals, classes, Family Life Groups, and sermons.
4. Independently dig into the word daily – Acts 17 (Bereans), Hebrews 4:12.
5. Don't just hear but follow and do what the word says.



The world also thinks and writes about wisdom, and philosophers and thinkers have written of wisdom over the centuries as shown below:

"My advice to Sunday schools, no matter what their denomination, is: Hold fast to the Bible as the sheet anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this Book [we are] indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this must we look as our guide in the future. 'Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people.'" (Ulysses S. Grant)

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose. **Jim Elliot**

By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is

easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.

Confucius

The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails.

William Arthur Ward

An unknown author wrote the following story that is food for thought:

An old pencil maker took his newest pencil aside, just before he was about to pack him into a box. Imagining the little fellow as a person he recalled a few things about the pencil.

"There are five things you need to know," he said to his pencil, "before I send you out into the world. Always remember these five things – never forget them – and you will become the best pencil you can be!"

"The first thing is to remember that you will be able to do many great things, but only if you put yourself in someone else's hands.

"From time to time, you will experience a painful sharpening but remember that this will make you a better pencil.

"Also, keep in mind that you will be able to correct any mistakes you might make along the way.

"The most important part of you is what's on the inside.

"Remember this as well, upon every surface that you are used, you must leave your mark. No matter what else happens, you must continue to write."

It seemed the pencil listened to him and promised he would remember these five things so that he could live his life with heart and purpose.

May we all continue to seek wisdom from the One who generously gives wisdom to those who seek it.

Evelyn Waite, Rolla, Missouri



In Her Wisdom, She Redeemed the Time

One of the most evangelistic Christians I have ever known recently passed away after a battle with cancer. **Ovia Marie McGinnis** was fearless and tireless in her efforts to reach and teach as many people as she possibly could.

If she met a doctor, lawyer, professor, a fast-food restaurant employee, or a common laborer, she asked if they knew Jesus. She would then proceed to teach for

as long as he or she would listen. If she met someone who was down and out, she taught them how to become Christians so that they could inherit the richness and beauty of heaven in the next life.

I knew Ovia Marie from approximately 1985 until her death in January, 2023. I have no idea how many thousands of people she taught over the years. Those who remain faithful will inherit eternal life in the presence of God. What an amazing gift she led them to!

Ovia Marie is greatly missed by her large family and the many people she knew. The beauties and treasures of heaven are for her now. In my imagination, I think of her talking with Paul about his drive and desire to teach every person and to strengthen every congregation he could, no matter the physical cost to himself. He and she can probably swap stories and keep one another's attention for hours...but wait! There is no timetable in heaven! Neither are there any tired, weary bodies, no hardships such as Paul experienced, no more cancer, no more crying, no more sorrow. What a fantastic place to be! When my life is completed, I hope to join them and hear their stories. As the beautiful old song says, "Won't it be Wonderful There!"

Evelyn Waite, Rolla, Missouri

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The Story of the Cracked Pot

"A water bearer in India had two large pots, each hung on each end of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full.

For a full two years, this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water in his master's house. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect to the end for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. 'I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you.'

The bearer asked, 'Why? What are you ashamed of?'

The pot replied, 'For these past two years I am able to deliver only half of my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you don't get full value for your efforts.'

The water bearer felt sorry for the old, cracked pot, and in his compassion, he said, 'As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path.'

As they went up the hill, the old, cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it somewhat. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again it apologized to the bearer for its failure.

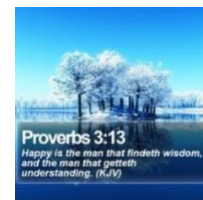
The bearer said to the pot, 'Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of your path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house.'"

Author Unknown

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*"Wisdom is oft times nearer when we stoop
than when we soar.
(William Wordsworth, The Excursion)*

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