



## **INTRODUCTION: DEFINING WISDOM**

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After centuries of guidance, scientific discoveries and philosophical inquiries, man is empowered more than ever to address the fundamental question: With all the wisdom we have gained through the ages, how can we live a fulfilling and meaningful life?

Of all human pursuits, defining wisdom is one of our most elusive endeavors. The ideal of wisdom encompasses more than the judgment needed to make decisions, or simply choosing the best answer between available options. The possession of factual knowledge alone does not constitute the attainment of true wisdom, because wisdom does not necessarily entail great intellectual aptitude. Wisdom transcends practical intelligence.

So, “where shall wisdom be found?” (Job 28:12).

The lover of wisdom is distinguished by a passion for knowledge and an insatiable curiosity to search for truth. In antiquity, Aristotle taught that the good life was attained by the ability to deliberate well; combining insight and intuitive reason with the intent to secure a good result. Socrates, possibly the most preeminent example of a wise, sage philosopher and a lover of learning, believed that the search for knowledge begins with wonder. He attempted to define wisdom by focusing not on what he knew, but, more importantly, on the realization that there were things he did not know. Socrates considered wisdom to be synonymous with self-restraint, control, and measured moderation; believing that when knowledge was combined with wisdom, “the highest of human things” was achieved (Plato, *Protagoras*). As shown by the ancients, one who is guided by reason, a rational mind, and an all-encompassing knowledge of the world, is in a better

position to choose the best course of action – and impart wisdom. In the words of Rene Descartes, wisdom is “but a perfect knowledge of all that men can know” (Descartes, *The Principles of Philosophy*).

Throughout history, theologians and philosophers alike have assigned the understanding of nature’s transcendental significance to the definition of wisdom. Virtue and honorable moral principles are qualities essential to man in understanding what to value and how to act justly, with reason. Many hold that wisdom denotes the knowledge of those truths that lead to the awareness of God. In 1536 CE, John Calvin combined these thoughts by describing wisdom as consisting “almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves” (Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Chapter 1, 1).

The newly cultivated empiricism of the world’s scientific community has combined intelligence with courage and earnest action to advance our comprehension of life’s primordial secrets: How did the world begin? What is the meaning of life? What is the nature of human existence? And, is there a God? Arising out of the darkness, these stewards of wisdom continue to search for truth by challenging convention with their confidence and optimism.

**Thus, fear and complacency arrive from the abandonment of wisdom.**

**Therefore, a sensible man will have the discipline and ambition to embrace wisdom:**

**To desire knowledge,**

**To love justice with humility,**

**To embrace compassion and moral good,**

**To follow reason with self-assurance,**

**To abhor wickedness and lawlessness,**

**To exhibit courage with prudence.**

**Thereby, winning recognition from the divine spirit of nature.**