

# THE SPIRIT'S FIRST GIFT: WISDOM

Is 11:1-3; Pr 14:1-35; Heb 5:12-14; James 1:1-5, 3:17; I Cor 2:10-15

## I. DOES “ANYONE LACK WISDOM”?

- A. Evidence; T.S. Eliot’s “Choruses from the Rock;” Katherine Porter’s *Ship of Fools*; Dennis Prager’s laments
- B. Explanation: few ask God for it! *Pride* (the cardinal sin) prevents acknowledgment of limits
  - 1. Purely human “wisdom” admirable but insufficient—e.g. Krista Tippett’s *Becoming Wise* shortcomings
  - 2. Spirit-given wisdom most efficacious—supernatural addition to natural acquisition
- C. Importance: much “Wisdom” literature in Bible (especially when counting Greek Septuagint used in 1<sup>st</sup> century)

## II. RIGHTLY DEFINING *SOPHIA*

- A. *Sophia* means the highest intellectual gift, granting “insight into the ways and purposes of God” (NT *Lexicon*); St Augustine: “contemplation of eternal things” (*Trinity*, XII, 14)
  - 1. Insight an important mental capacity (cf. *Insight* by Bernard Lonergan)
  - 2. *Connatural* (sharing nature, via imparted Grace) with Charity (the Holy Spirit within)—“wisdom of love”
- B. *Sophia* both speculative (truth re reality) and practical (right course of action)—equally essential
  - 1. Discerning highest causes (Aristotle: “all men suppose what is called Wisdom to deal with the first causes and the principles of things” (*Metaphysics*, 1,1)—thus, for example:
    - a. In medicine, skilled physicians detect real reason for afflictions
    - b. In architecture, best masters know materials’ composition, forms’ potential
    - c. In agriculture, seasoned farmers know soils & seasons, seeds & strategies
  - 2. Setting things in order—e.g. biology (genus, species, etc.); chronology in history;

## III. “LOOKING UNTO JESUS” (Heb 12:2) AS WISDOM’S EXEMPLAR

- A. Revealing incidents: as boy in Temple; various encounters speaking with “authority”
- B. Revealing Truth re God (Jn I 18; I Jn 1:1-5)
  - 1. Jesus’ Father—unique affirmation God: FATHER acronym:
    - a. First Person of the Holy Trinity (Jn 14:7)—Word begotten, Spirit proceeding
    - b. Almighty (Lk 1:37)—able to do “all things that are possible” (Aquinas)
    - c. Truth (Jn 14:6-7)—“primal” designer, speaking Word Who indwells visible & invisible realms
    - d. Holy (Rev 15:4)—unique, separate, transcendent, pure, radiant
    - e. Eternal (Dt 33:27)—everlasting, timeless; Alpha and Omega
    - f. Ruler (Job 37:6-13; Col 1:12; Heb 1:13)—authoritative Lawgiver; providential orchestrator
  - 2. Jesus’ “I am’s” rooted in His assertion that “before Abraham was, I am” (Jn 8:58—*ego eimi*) duplicating Ex 3:14 revelation to Moses—crucial texts for Christian thought
    - a. Light (Jn 9:5)—key clue to both material (e.g. Einstein’s theory) and spiritual (e.g. John’s emphasis)
    - b. Door (Jn 10:7)—granting access to Ultimate Reality, heavenly sphere
    - c. Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11)—cf. Ps 23: tender, resourceful, guide
    - d. Resurrection (Jn 11:25)—everlasting life (Jn 3:16) rooted in Ultimate Life-Source
    - e. Way (Jn 14:6)—narrow, disciplined path leading God-ward
    - f. Truth (Jn 14:6)—essence-designing Word whereby we see why things are as they are
    - g. Life (Jn 14:6)—animating creation
    - h. True Vine (Jn 15:1)—sustaining source (physical & spiritual) of all that is
- C. Illustrating Wisdom’s ways (and the kind of wisdom to pray for as Gift of Spirit)
  - 1. *Dialogue*: Jesus at 12 in Temple (Lk 2:40, 49)—doing Father’s business, interacting with thinkers—process evident in Plato’s *Dialogues*, Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologiae*, Peter Kreeft’s treatises
  - 2. *Discernment*: Jesus selecting 12 disciples, seeing truth re woman at the well—important for us when leading families, building business or ministerial team (staff, church officials, musicians, teachers etc.)
  - 3. *Analogies*: Jesus continually used ordinary events or items to reveal extraordinary truths (thus “the kingdom is like)—important in teaching, discipleship; Solomon’s wisdom (I K 4:30-34) analogical; N.B. C.S. Lewis, both in precept and example; N.B. J. Warner Wallace’s use of his detective training to establish contemporary apologetics in *Cold-Case Christianity*, *God’s Crime Scene*, & *Forensic Faith*
  - 4. *Parables*: Jesus creatively crafted stories (Prodigal Son, Lazarus & Dives, etc.) designed to illuminate truths re God, Kingdom, etc.; similarly, Dostoevsky, T.S. Eliot, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, tell stories capable of awakening reader to God’s Reality & Will; N.B. A. Lincoln’s propensity for stories
  - 5. *Decisions*: Jesus, especially in crises, acted wisely (temptations in desert; responding to Pharisees’ traps; answering Pontius Pilate; Church History illustrations (e.g. Council of Nicea, 325 A.D.)

The Eagle soars in the summit of Heaven,  
The Hunter with his dogs pursues his circuit.  
O perpetual revolution of configured stars,  
O perpetual recurrence of determined seasons,  
O world of spring and autumn, birth and dying  
The endless cycle of idea and action,  
Endless invention, endless experiment,  
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;  
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;  
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.  
All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance,  
All our ignorance brings us nearer to death,  
But nearness to death no nearer to GOD.  
Where is the Life we have lost in living?  
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?  
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?  
The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries  
Bring us farther from GOD and nearer to the Dust.

—Opening Stanza of T. S. Eliot's  
“Choruses from the Rock”