

# Where can Wisdom be found?

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Preacher: Jonathan de Groot

[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you. Well, we come now to God's Word in the Bible. We're going to read Job chapter 28. If you have a Bible with you, do turn to the book of Job chapter 28.

! If you don't have one, then the Bible's in the seats in front. It should be page 528. Page 528. And also it's up on the screen, Job chapter 28.

Let's read God's Word together. There is a mine for silver and a place where gold is refined. Iron is taken from the earth and copper is smelted from ore. Mortals put an end to the darkness. They search out the furthest recesses for ore in the blackest darkness.

Far from human dwellings, they cut a shaft. In places untouched by human feet, far from other people, they dangle and sway. The earth from which food comes is transformed below as by fire.

[ 1 : 12 ] Lapis-Lusalli comes from its rocks and its dust contains nuggets of gold. No bird of prey knows that hidden path. No falcon's eye has seen it.

Proud beasts do not set foot on it and no lion prowls there. People assault the flinty rock with their hands and lay bare the roots of the mountains. They tunnel through the rock.

Their eyes see all its treasures. They search the sources of the rivers and bring hidden things to light. But where can wisdom be found?

Where does understanding dwell? No mortal comprehends its worth. It cannot be found in the land of the living. The deep says it is not in me. The sea says it is not with me.

It cannot be bought with the finest gold, nor can its price be weighed out in silver. It cannot be bought with the gold of offer, with precious onyx or lapis-Lusalli.

[ 2 : 11 ] Neither gold nor crystal can compare with it, nor can it be had for jewels of gold. Coral and jasper are not worthy of mention. The price of wisdom is beyond rubies.

The topaz of Cush cannot compare with it. It cannot be bought with pure gold. Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell?

It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds in the sky. Destruction and death say only a rumor of it has reached our ears. God understands the way to it, for he alone knows where it dwells.

For he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. When he established the force of the wind and measured out the waters. When he made a decree for the rain and a path for the thunderstorm.

Then he looked at wisdom and appraised it. He confirmed it and tested it. And he said to the human race, the fear of the Lord. That is wisdom.

[ 3 : 16 ] And to shun evil is understanding. Well, let's pray. These are mysterious words. So let's ask for God's help as we think about them together. Thank you, God, for your word.

We thank you that it points us to your son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we pray that as we seek to understand what you are saying to us. You would help us to discover wisdom that comes from you for our lives.

For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Okay. Well, if you're just joining us today, we've been looking at the book of Job in the Old Testament. And it's part of what the Bible is called the wisdom literature.

And so the question is, well, where does wisdom come from? We need wisdom for life, don't we? If we face a challenge, then we need wisdom to know how to handle it.

If we've got a tough decision to make, we need wisdom in order to make it. If we are involved in some kind of complicated relationship, then we need wisdom in order to navigate it.

[ 4 : 22 ] If we're suffering, then we need wisdom in order to know how to respond and to make sense of it. Without wisdom in our lives, things can get far worse instead of better, can't they?

Human beings, of course, have always searched for wisdom. And in this world of artificial intelligence, AI, chat, GPT, and all of that, there is no shortage of information out there. We've got knowledge at our fingertips, but having knowledge and having information and having intelligence is one thing, isn't it? But having wisdom is something else. So where does wisdom come from? That is really the question that Job chapter 28 asks, but also answers for us. Look at verse 12.

Where can wisdom be found? And then again, verse 20. Where then does wisdom come from? These are the two questions that drive this, what is a poem on wisdom.

[ 5 : 23 ] And this poem fits within Job and his final speech in the book from chapters 26 to 31. And so if you've been with us so far, Job has had this long, heated debate with his friends about suffering.

And what they've discovered is that human wisdom has failed to help Job in his suffering. So he needs more than human wisdom in suffering, because we all do.

And now in chapter 28, what we find is a different tone. It's more calm. It's considered. And it's basically a poem on wisdom. And what it does is it gives us a new perspective, because a new perspective is needed, an outside perspective, and a better perspective than the one that Job's friends have given him.

Because what we essentially need is God's wisdom, as opposed to human wisdom, and especially so when we're suffering. Now, the Bible commentators aren't 100% sure who speaks these words. It could be Job. It could be the author of the book of Job. But whether it's Job or the author, it really makes no difference to the message that is here. Because the message is, you and I, we all need wisdom when we're suffering.

[ 6 : 39 ] And so Job 28 shines a light on what's been said in the past, in the book. But it also anticipates what is coming, and what God is going to say, and how God is going to respond to the suffering of Job.

And so this great poem essentially shows us where wisdom comes from. And it unfolds wisdom in three parts for us. And so they're going to be the three headings for our message this afternoon. They're on the screen. First of all, the search for wisdom. Second, the secret of wisdom. And then third, the source of wisdom. So first of all, the search for wisdom. Verse 1 to 11.

If you look down, you'll see that the search for wisdom is described with this metaphor of mining. Now, it basically highlights how humans have discovered all kinds of treasures from the earth, but they failed in their search for wisdom.

So just look again at verse 1 to verse 4. There is a mine for silver in a place where gold is refined. Iron is taken from the earth, and copper is smelted from ore.

[ 7 : 46 ] Where mortals put an end to the darkness. They search out the furthest recesses from ore in the blackest darkness. Far from human dwellings, they cut a shaft in places untouched by human feet.

Far from other people, they dangle and sway. Now, as you read that, we're meant to marvel at the skill of mining. And I'm sure you've got plenty of other things that are on your mind that you don't really need to hear about mining this afternoon.

And I guess you've never given mining much thought. I mean, unless that's your job. If that's your job, then you do need to think about it. But most of us have never really thought about mining. I know that there's a popular video game called Minecraft.

It's all about mining, creating new worlds by digging down, seeing what kinds of materials are in the earth. But when you consider it, mining is actually a really very highly skilled work.

It's fascinating when you drill down, if you pardon the pun. Because it's been a process that human beings have been engaged in ever since the beginning of time.

[ 8 : 56 ] Skillfully mining for precious elements that are hidden in the ground. Unearthing precious materials has always been what humans have searched for.

But we know that it's not an easy task. And that's why this mining metaphor that comes up here is meant to help us describe and think through the search that we have as human beings for wisdom. It's basically saying wisdom is so important in life that it's worth searching for. And so in searching for precious treasure here, it basically mirrors Job's search for understanding in his suffering. It's difficult and it's costly because wisdom is such a valuable commodity. And so this poem reflects the challenge of searching for wisdom for human beings.

Just see how the search for hidden elements of the earth is described here. So the elements, silver, gold, iron, copper, they're precious, they're valuable materials, and so they're worth searching for. [10:03] But they're hard to find. Because if you look down, their locations make this clear. They're in the furthest recesses. Verse 3, the blackest darkness. Verse 3, verse 4, far from human dwellings.

Verse 4 again, in places untouched by human feet and far from other people. And so if you're mining for precious materials, it's a lonely job and it's a dangerous job trying to find them. And that's why we're supposed to admire this human achievement in mining. Humans have shown great industry by finding the most valuable elements that this world has got to offer. Gold and silver and all of that stuff. And it's this ability to do this that this poem says sets us apart from the animals. So just look at verse 7 and 8.

No bird of prey knows that hidden path. No falcon's eye has seen it. Proud beasts do not set foot on it. And no lion prowls there. So I love watching eagles fly.

[11:05] If you've seen a golden eagle fly away soaring up high in the sky, it can spot its prey away down on the ground and just swoop down instantly, grab its food and fly up again.

It's amazing. But this poem's saying birds of prey, eagles, falcons, even with this fantastic eyesight and skill that they've got, they just can't see or discover what humans are able to see or discover. And then the poem speaks about the lion, that great beast with power and strength and might. But it still can't search out and discover what humans can.

Let's look at verse 9 to 11. People assault the flinty rock with their hands and lay bare the roots of the mountains. They tunnel through the rock. Their eyes see its treasures. They search the sources of the rivers and bring hidden things to light.

So it's human beings who mine. It's not birds of prey. It's not lions. It's humans. We dig. We drill. We tunnel. To find precious treasure deep in the earth.

[12:16] It's a difficult task. But it's done because what you find is valuable and of worth. And so humans have always made fantastic discoveries. Now, whether it's mining for precious materials or making discoveries in the fields of science, technology, engineering, medicine, and so on, we're able to do all of this amazing stuff with great human skill and ingenuity.

We can advance in knowledge. We can increase in understanding. We can break new ground. We can bring hidden things to light. But the poem's saying, in all of our searching as human beings, with all of our knowledge, can we find wisdom?

Because it is the single most valuable commodity of them all. And that's what this section wants us to consider. Yeah, we might be able to mine the physical earth for hidden treasure.

But can we find wisdom? Can we find it for living our life Monday to Saturday and then Sunday? Can we find wisdom?

And can we find wisdom when we're suffering? How are we going to be helped when we face pain and struggle and suffering? And so that's the search for wisdom it's highlighting for us.

[13:38] And secondly, there's the secret of wisdom. Because though we search for wisdom, the secret of wisdom actually escapes us. And so the question is asked there in verse 12, But where can wisdom be found?

Where does understanding dwell? Well, what's meant by wisdom? What's meant by understanding these words? Wisdom and understanding go together. The Hebrew word for wisdom means skill or ability.

So being able to do something practically. And the Hebrew word for understanding means discernment or insight. So being able to make a right judgment.

Or to grasp some complex thing really clearly. But wisdom is more than just knowledge of the facts. Wisdom is knowing what to do with that knowledge.

How to apply it to life and living. And so in the context of Job here, it's a wisdom that's revealed by God. And it's a wisdom that's dependent on a relationship with God.

[14:47] And so God himself is going to speak about wisdom. He's going to speak about understanding when he later speaks to Job. He's going to help Job grasp the true source of wisdom.

To enable Job and us to realize basically how weak and how small we are. In comparison to this vast, great universe that God has made.

And so this poem is meant to be a reminder to us that the human search for wisdom is actually futile if you keep God out of the picture.

It's saying to us you can't find wisdom by yourself. We can't mine for wisdom and then somehow unearth it like we might mine for an unearthen precious treasure.

And so in this section, the middle one, we're told that while wisdom is a treasure, it is inaccessible to humanity. And this is emphasized in all the negative statements in verse 13 to 19.

[15:56] So just read with me again, verse 13 and 14. No mortal comprehends its worth. It cannot be found in the land of the living. The deep says it is not mine. The sea says it is not with me.

So we can't comprehend the worth of wisdom. We can't find it in this world. Verse 15. It cannot be bought with the finest gold, nor can its price be weighed out in silver. You can't buy wisdom with gold.

You can't put a price on it with silver. Essentially, it's priceless, nor can you buy wisdom with the most precious jewels. Verse 16. It's got all these different jewels.

Gold of offer, onyx, lapis, lazuli, which is like a blue stone, like sapphire. Crystal, jewels for gold, coral, jasper, topaz.

All of these precious elements, the finest gold, silver, onyx, sapphire, crystal, coral, jasper, rubies, topaz. It can't buy you wisdom.

[16:56] Wisdom is like in a league all of its own. It's like the Champions League compared to the Scottish Championship, which is a much lower league. Wisdom is far more precious.

And so we might be able to search out and find valuable metals and jewels, but wisdom, this most precious and most valuable element of all, is inaccessible to us.

And so what the poem is doing is making us face up to the reality of our situation, to help us see the limitations in our human ability, that we might think we're great, but we're not that great.

We might have knowledge and education. We might be able to find the answer to something on our smartphone. I was in a social situation this week with a bunch of people, and one guy, whatever the issue was or whatever the question was, would get his smartphone out and Google whatever the thing was we were trying to discuss.

And it was so annoying. Every two minutes, he would say, Google AI says da-da-da-da-da-da. Yeah, you can read the phone, and yeah, there's knowledge out there, but that's different from wisdom, isn't it?

[18:14] Wisdom would be, well, you kind of just need to engage in the conversation and stop taking your phone out and looking at what your phone says every three seconds. It wasn't anyone here, by the way, so don't panic.

And so we get this question, don't we, 21 and 22, where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell? So we can search for wisdom, but it's hidden from us.

And this is so humbling, isn't it? Because no matter how much we can increase our knowledge, going to school or university, learning a job, whatever it is, no matter how much we seek understanding, we can still fall short when it comes to wisdom.

And so some of the most intelligent people in this world have made an absolute shipwreck of their lives because of the stupid things they've done with relationships or money or whatever it is.

And so we fall short when it comes to wisdom. But the poem's saying it's not just hidden from our eyes. Death can't even find wisdom either. Verse 22, destruction and death say only a rumor of it has reached our ears.

[19:25] So the secret of wisdom, that's our second point, the secret of wisdom is we can't find wisdom by ourselves, no matter how hard we try.

Googling, can I find wisdom? And whatever the AI answer is, it's not going to give you wisdom. And yet we all admit that we really need wisdom for living life, don't we?

Especially when it comes to our suffering and how we handle it. Because all of our knowledge and all of our understanding and all of our strength, all of our ability, all of our reasoning, all of our resources won't help us in suffering the way that wisdom can.

And I think we actually know this, don't we? And it's probably because we've learned it through a painful period of suffering in our lives. Before we began the suffering, we thought we could cope. We thought we had the strength, the skill, the resources, the ability to be able to cope with whatever life can throw at us. But when suffering strikes, an unexpected tragedy, a work redundancy, a relational breakup, a loved one dies, diagnosis of cancer, a child ruins their life, or whatever it is,

then we discover how weak, how weak and helpless we really are.

[ 20 : 49 ] And we need wisdom. And Job needed wisdom to help make sense of his suffering. It wasn't coming from his friends. It wasn't coming from his raw experience of life.

And so wisdom's got to come from elsewhere, hasn't it? It's got to come from beyond us. It doesn't come from within us. Wisdom, this poem is saying to us, is revealed, revealed by God himself. Otherwise, we'll never make sense of anything, especially suffering if God is kept at bay. But thankfully, while we're reminded that wisdom cannot be found, this poem also reassures us that wisdom does come from somewhere.

One of you spotted how the two questions about wisdom aren't the same, verse 12 and then verse 20. They sound the same. I mean, they're very similar, but they're actually different.

So see the first question in verse 12. It says, where can wisdom be found? But the second question in verse 20 says, where then does wisdom come from?

[ 22 : 00 ] Which is a different question, isn't it? So the first question's asking, if wisdom can be found through your own searching. Can you find wisdom yourself, in other words?

And the answer is no. Whereas the second question is asking, if wisdom comes from somewhere? And the answer is yes. Wisdom comes from God himself.

It's never found through human reason. It only comes through God's revelation. And that's why this poem is so magnificent, because it doesn't just make us aware of the search for wisdom, or the secret of wisdom.

It points us to the source of wisdom, because we need to go there, to the source, in order to be wise. And so that's our third and final point, the source of wisdom, verse 23 to 28.

What's the source of wisdom? The answer is God. Look at verse 23. God understands the way to it, and he alone knows where it dwells.

[ 23 : 05 ] So only God understands the way to wisdom. And that's where this poem has been leading us, and pointing us, and directing us. And so if you glance down at verse 23 to 28, it's pointing us to the wisdom of God, and controlling absolutely everything.

It's saying to us there's a pattern, and there's a plan, and there's a purpose to everything that God does. And that's why this section focuses specifically on God's wisdom in creation, in this world that has been made by him.

And it says he has wisely ordered everything, verse 24, for he views the ends of the earth, and sees everything under the heavens.

So God can look to the ends of the earth, and he can see everything at once, because he created them. But this is not just some kind of super-duper peripheral vision that God's got.

It's saying that God can pay attention to everything at the same time. He can inspect it, and see it, and know it. He sees it all.

[ 24 : 21 ] And he knows everything that's going on. So from the complexities of the creation that he made, but also every human heart, and every human action is known and seen by him.

And so God knows exactly what should be done, and why everything must happen the way that it does. And it's all due to his wise ordering of this world, which even includes the weather system.

Look at verse 25 to 27. When he established the force of the wind, and measured out the waters, when he made a decree for the rain, and a path for the thunderstorm, and he looked at wisdom and appraised it.

He confirmed it and tested it. Now we live in Glasgow. The weather seems completely random. Like when I walked in the door, 2.30, it was sunny. When Ash was praying, it was raining.

In between times, it was freezing. And there's probably going to be snow later tonight. We get like four seasons in one day, practically every single day. In Glasgow. The weather's so unpredictable.

[ 25 : 30 ] And this poem's saying to us, it's not just the weather that's unpredictable, but the force that the weather brings is also unpredictable. So the poem speaks of the force of the wind, a decree for the rain, and a path for the thunderstorm.

Last time there was a thunderstorm. Our neighbour, our neighbour, at the end of our street, a tree blew over, and landed on top of his BMW car.

Now you may have thought BMWs were strong cars. He's a businessman, so he drives a big BMW. You may have thought they're strong cars, but they don't look too good when they're folded over like paper. It was a real, he wasn't in it at the time, so all good, he got his insurance, and a new car.

But it was a real mess. But that's the weather. The time before, the storm before that storm. And there's lots of storms, you lose track of which storm. A blue wheelie bin, recycling bin, just came flying into our garden over the hedge.

The hedge is like about 10 feet high. So I've got two wheelie bins to go along to the other 15 multicoloured bins that are in the drive. But it's just the random nature of the weather.

[ 26 : 41 ] And we know that. And so we're reminded that the wind, the rain, the thunder, and the lightning, they're all part of the creation. And they're elements that are both destructive, we probably know more of the destruction, but they're also life-giving, aren't they?

And God uses the weather to bring both in his wise ordering of this world. And so there's an order, and there's a pattern, and a wisdom to everything that God does.

Now God is going to explain this to Job himself later on in chapter 38 and chapter 39. So we'll get to that. But just trying to understand God's pattern and what he's doing is perplexing.

But it's clear when you read the Bible and the book of Job and elsewhere that God is wise, he is loving, he is good, he is powerful, and he even allows pain and suffering to accomplish his good purposes.

And that's primarily seen, supremely seen at the cross where Jesus died. And the suffering and death of Jesus, God was doing something good to save the world. And he's also doing something in Job's life.

[ 28 : 02 ] And when suffering comes, God is also doing something in our lives. And it's hard to understand, and that's why we need wisdom from him to help us.

We need to know that the all-wise, all-loving, all-powerful, all-good God knows what he's doing. And that's really the awesome vision that the book of Job wants us to get about God.

There's a great poem that a woman called Corrie Ten Boom, she was Dutch, she read this poem often. I don't know if she wrote it, but she frequently quoted it.

It's called the Tapestry Poem. Just to try and make sense and understand just what is going on when suffering comes. And this is it. My life is but a weaving between my God and me.

I cannot choose the colors he weaveth steadily. Ofttimes he weaveth sorrow, and I in foolish pride. Forget he sees the upper, and I the underside.

[ 29 : 06 ] But till the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly, will God unroll the canvas and reveal the reason why. The dark threads are as needful in the weaver's skillful hand as the threads of gold and silver in the pattern he has planned.

The dark threads are as needful in the weaver's skillful hand as the threads of gold and silver in the pattern he has planned. It blows our minds, doesn't it, when we think of God working out his plan according to his pattern.

Now we might have our pattern for our life, but God may have a very different one. And we see our pattern to some extent or a bit or into next week, but we don't really see into the future and what it's going to be like.

And we don't always understand God's plan. We have our plans, but we don't know what his plan is. But Job is telling us God in his wisdom does know what he's doing.

And so it's only in knowing God that we can receive wisdom. And that's really where this poem concludes. Look at verse 28. And he said to the human race, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.

[ 30 : 24 ] And to shun evil is understanding. So the poem's been asking, remember verse 12, where can wisdom be found? Then again, verse 20, where then does wisdom come from? Here we get the definitive answer, verse 28.

But it's not merely the answer of Job, chapter 28. It's not merely the answer of the book of Job. It's not even the answer of the wisdom literature of the Bible. It's the answer of the Bible itself.

Where does wisdom come from? We read the fear of the Lord. That is wisdom. It's the answer that the book of Job has been pushing us towards.

It hasn't come from Job's friends. It hasn't even come from Job himself. It comes from God. And just notice verse 28.

God is the one who is speaking now. God's words are set apart from the poem. And they're framed with this phrase, and he said to the human race.

[ 31 : 25 ] So God's now speaking to humanity. Well, to Job, to his friends, but also to all of us. And it's the first time God has spoken in the book of Job since chapters 1 and 2 in the dialogue with Satan.

And it's the first time in the book of Job that God has spoken to human beings. And so it's highly significant as God directs our attention away from all the questions that we might have about suffering and towards him.

God doesn't give Job or us answers to all our questions. Instead, he gives us himself, which is much better.

And so what does it mean to fear the Lord? It's not saying we should be scared of God. Yet because of who he is, majestic and mighty and magnificent, then we ought to relate to him with awe and reverence, bowing down before him with our faces to the ground.

That's what it means to fear the Lord. And the phrase to shun evil as understanding basically means that's our way of life. That's how we live.

[ 32 : 43 ] And Job himself is a really good example of this way of life. Remember how Job's described earlier in the book. He's a man who fears God and shuns evil. And here we're being told, that's wisdom.

Fear God and shun evil. That's wisdom embodied. Because when we bow before the Lord God in wonder and in worship, we discover the wisdom we need to help us in our suffering.

The kind of fear that we're thinking about, I think is illustrated really well in C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*. And C.S. Lewis, the great Oxford English teacher, has written all these books. And in one of them, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, I think his most famous book, there's this conversation about the character of Aslan, who in the book is, is the kind of Christ figure, a great lion, strong, mighty, powerful.

And the conversation goes along like this. Susan asks, is he quite safe? Aslan, massive, strong lion. And then Mr. Beaver, he says, safe?

[ 33 : 51 ] Who said anything about safe? Of course he isn't safe, but he's good. He's the king, I tell you. And it's only when we discover what God is like, then we will know what it means to fear him.

We'll recognize that he is the Lord. He's the Lord, and he sees everything. He's wise, good, loving, powerful, and so he can be trusted.

And so what's our response? Well, we've just got to humble ourselves before him and accept that he knows what's best. Understanding that he is good, and because he's good, that means he doesn't always play it safe when it comes to our lives.

As he's weaving his pattern for our lives into his perfect plan. He knows what he's doing, even if we don't. And that's what Job was learning.

And so wisdom helped Job just cling on to God while he was suffering, trusting that whilst he didn't understand why, he knew the one who did.

[ 35 : 04 ] And so wisdom basically directs us away from seeking answers and towards God himself. The fear of the Lord doesn't necessarily stop suffering, but it will sustain us through it.

And so as we wrap this up, Job chapter 28 points us to the source of wisdom, and that's God himself. The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.

And this wisdom is portrayed in the life of Job, but this wisdom is supremely displayed and portrayed in the life of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament part of the Bible, it tells us that Jesus has become for us wisdom from God.

Want to know what wisdom looks like? Jesus. It also says, in him, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And so it's saying to us, in Jesus' life, and in Jesus' death, and in Jesus' resurrection, the wisdom of God is revealed to all of this world so we can all see it and be in no doubt about what it means to be wise and where wisdom comes from.

Just think about it. In Jesus' life and in his teaching, he taught wisdom to show us how to live as wise people. We need to listen to what Jesus says to us if we want to be wise.

[ 36 : 32 ] And in Jesus' death, we see the wisdom of the cross, where it looked like foolishness that a man would die, but God was using what looked like foolishness to be his means of saving sinful people like us.

There's wisdom in the foolishness of the cross. And in Jesus' resurrection, we see the wisdom of God's purposes because through the defeat of Satan, sin, and death on the cross, and then Jesus rising to life again, we know that one day Jesus will return and he will end all suffering for good. And that's the world we all want. And that's the world that is coming because God's wisdom has designed it to be that way. And so how do you get wisdom? Final question.

How do you get wisdom? The way to wisdom is to repent of our sin and to believe in Jesus Christ. Trusting in Jesus as our Savior, following Jesus as our Lord, is how we live a wise life. To ignore Jesus, to reject God, is to go another way and to live a foolish life and to end in a bad place. Only Jesus Christ will enable us to live wisely whatever suffering comes our way.