Wisdom?

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." (James 1:5, ESV)

Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived.

At least that is how we commonly describe him. Scripture tells us that *"God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure."* (1 Kings 4:29, ESV) His judgment concerning the two women who claimed the same child remains one of Scripture's great demonstrations of wisdom. Solomon understood human nature well enough to devise a test that exposed the truth.

But this extraordinarily wise man also had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines.

That gives us reason to think.

Long before Solomon, God had specifically commanded concerning Israel's king, *"And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away."* (Deuteronomy 17:17, ESV) Solomon did precisely what God had forbidden, and precisely what God warned about happened. His wives turned his heart away.

How can a man possess extraordinary wisdom and behave so foolishly?

Perhaps because possessing wisdom does not mean we always use it.

We sometimes define wisdom as the rightful application of knowledge. That is certainly part of it. Knowledge tells us what is true. Wisdom takes what is true and applies it rightly to life. But biblical wisdom goes deeper.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." (Proverbs 9:10, ESV)

Wisdom begins with God. It sees life in relationship to Him and orders life accordingly.

That means intelligence is not wisdom. Education is not wisdom. Experience is not necessarily wisdom. A person may possess enormous knowledge and still be a fool. Someone may know exactly what God has said and deliberately do the opposite.

Solomon proves it.

And so do we.

As the years accumulate, it becomes easier to look backward and recognize decisions that were foolish. Things once thought sensible no longer appear so. Words should have remained unspoken. Other words should have been spoken. Decisions were made too quickly. Warnings were ignored. Pride masqueraded as confidence. Desire overruled judgment.

Perhaps one evidence of growing wisdom is becoming increasingly aware of how foolish we have been.

But age itself does not make us wise. An old fool has simply had more time to practice foolishness.

James tells us what to do when we lack wisdom: ask God. And God promises to give generously.

Later James asks, *"Who is wise and understanding among you?"* Then he tells us where to look for the answer: *"By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom."* (James 3:13, ESV)

Wisdom shows itself in the way we live.

Nowhere is that more clearly seen than in Jesus Christ. Watch Him answer those who tried to trap Him. Watch Him speak to the woman at the well. Watch Him deal with His disciples. Watch Him remain silent before His accusers. Watch Him know when to rebuke and when to show tenderness.

Paul calls Christ *"the wisdom of God."* (1 Corinthians 1:24, ESV)

Wisdom was standing before them.

God promises wisdom when we ask. Perhaps our difficulty is not always that we do not know what is wise. Sometimes we know exactly what is right and choose something else.

Solomon knew.

So do we.

The question is not merely whether we have wisdom.

The question is whether we will walk in it.

Just a thought.

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