



Wisdom

/ˈwɪz-dəm/

noun

1. the ability to discern inner qualities and relationships;
insight
2. good sense; judgment

SIX

WISDOM

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

JAMES 3:17

As I age, my appearance ages as well. As my hair shows more and more signs of the years I've lived, I hope to embrace it as a token of what God has brought me through in this life—every peak and every valley, equally.

Surely you have those confidants whose advice you seek, whose spirit is attractive, oozing wisdom and wise counsel. I know I do. And I can't help but think of how the Lord richly rewarded Solomon, who was able to request any gift from Him, and he asked for God's wisdom.

Just like Solomon, we have the power to request *any* gift from the Lord, yet how often do we ask for His wisdom? His will, yes. His direction, sure. But His rich, all-consuming wisdom? Not as often.

We innately and naturally value wisdom in our relationships, and we know (with each new gray hair that sprouts up) that we are acquiring new wisdom as we face and overcome the many trials we encounter. And what a mighty

follower we would have to be to come face-to-face with our Creator and ask Him to give us a slice of His wisdom.

I love the way Scripture weaves together a narrative. Proverbs 31 tells us that beauty is fleeting, but the fear of the Lord is to be praised, Proverbs 9 says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Maybe it's no surprise then that as our youthful looks fade, our wisdom increases. In fact, I'm choosing to believe that as I gain wisdom, and as I seek God to receive it, the grays I'm gaining are even more beautiful, showcasing that I'm drawing nearer to Him.

Wisdom is beautiful, and it pleases God's heart for you to dive deeper to obtain it.

What does wisdom look like to you? Who are the wise people around you? Is there something you're struggling with that you could share in order to gain wise access around the subject? Don't be afraid to ask! Use this as a divine opportunity for those wise people to use the gift of wisdom to serve.



Dear God, thank You for the opportunity to experience true wisdom. Thank You for being a good and gracious Father who imparts Your wisdom to me. I want to know more and experience more with You. Today I ask You to share new wisdom with me so that I may learn even more about You.



Habit

/ˈhɑːbət/

noun

1. a settled tendency or usual manner of behavior
2. an acquired mode of behavior that has become nearly or completely involuntary

SEVEN
HABIT

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

PHILIPPIANS 4:13 ESV

Recently I've spent time talking to friends and employees about how to achieve a work-life balance, how to wear multiple hats well, and how to keep focus and priorities aligned with the Lord. It's easy to talk about, but difficult to do. The foundation, for me, undoubtedly lies in the Word of God.

I carve out quiet time each morning to absorb God's truth. Those moments become my rudder and set the direction for my day. Later, when I feel like I'm dog-paddling amid chaos, this gives my heart and mind something sound to reflect on. Having quality time with God must be what a weary traveler experiences when he or she stumbles upon an oasis in a desert: refreshment, renewal, and cleansing.

I've established other habits that help my heart focus on the Lord. Throughout the day, particularly when I'm painting, I keep praise and worship music playing. The powerful words streaming into my ears and heart reinforce God's promises.

Another habit is journaling—actively writing and practicing the elements of Scripture and creating a living dialogue between me and the Lord. This helps reinforce the depth of His words in my own life. By journaling, we can revisit the trials He has led us through and how His hand helped us along the journey. I'm

reminded over and over again that with each trial comes great learning and wisdom, and I can see victories both large and small along the way.

Another habit is setting an alarm on my phone with favorite Scriptures fully written out in the phone calendar. I have several, but one of my favorites is Ephesians 3:20, which repeats daily and pops up on my phone at 3:20 p.m. to remind me that God can do immeasurably more than we could ever ask or imagine. When that alarm sounds, and God's Word appears, I meditate on the scripture at hand and am reminded of God's Word and His hand on my life and circumstances. Setting these habits steers the direction of my heart throughout the day.

If you're just beginning to establish daily Christ-centered habits, I encourage you to begin by digging into the Word for a few minutes each day. Choose a verse and write it on your heart. Memorize it. Repeat it. Write it down. Have the scripture pop up on your phone every day. Claim it as your own mantra or battle cry. This simple step will have an impact on the course of your day and guide you into the weeks ahead. It will give you strength for whatever you are facing in life.

It's all too easy to pick up poor habits that draw our focus away from the Lord. What habits do you feel called to create for yourself? What Christ-centered habit can you begin today?



Dear God, it has become all too easy to find myself entangled in bad habits, but I know that my love for You will grow as I seek You daily. God, thank You for Your patience with me when I get distracted. Please embolden me to shed the negative habits that are keeping me burdened and away from You.



Guide

/'gɪd/

noun

1. one who leads or directs another's way
2. a person who directs another's conduct or course of life

EIGHT
GUIDE

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

JOHN 10:27

Recently I've been flying a lot. A fun and poignant mixture of visiting my girls in college, comforting grieving friends, attending speaking engagements, and just traveling for fun has me up in the clouds, and it's given me time to think about how unnatural flight really is. If you think about it, it takes a whole lot of faith to climb aboard a huge aircraft and trust that the enormous, heavy bird composed of metal and bolts will carry you to your destination.

On some flights, the captain will announce, "This is your captain speaking," followed by a reassuring monologue about the expected ease or bumpiness of the upcoming flight, the altitude to which we will be climbing, and the weather conditions we will encounter. I like these flights. I like hearing the voice of the person in control of the aircraft.

On other flights, the pilots don't say a word. You are sitting on the tarmac for what seems like hours and . . . nothing. Not a word. No echoing voices from the cockpit. Instead, I scan the faces of the flight attendants instructing us about safety measures and exit rows and beverage options and wonder, *Who's in charge here?*

In the same way those tons of steel and screws defy gravity and shouldn't logically be able to fly long distances, there's no logical reason my own baggage and burdens should have brought me to where I am in my life now. Whether I'm experiencing the turbulence that comes from mothering teenagers and adult children, or clear skies while worshiping and painting in my studio, I can hear God's voice say, "This is your Father speaking, and I'm in control."

Flying through life without seeking God's reassuring voice seems reckless and confusing. Where do you seek peace when the turbulence hits? Whom do you turn to for guidance? For me, the answer is easy. I open my Bible. Page after page, God's Word gives me guidance, affirmation, confidence, and restored faith. I hear my Father's voice—the Captain of my life—echoing, "Don't worry; I am in control."

I am so appreciative there are no guarantees that my walk with the Lord will be flawless or easy or without turbulence, but I can rest assured that my Pilot, my Captain, is the perfect guide.

How is God guiding you today? Where and how is He leading you?



Dear God, thank You for Your divine guidance. Thank You for steering me safely through choppy waters and gently leading me across smooth seas to solid ground. Lord, I ask that when I feel trials and tribulations around me, I would not be shaken, but that I would find peace because You are my constant Guide.



Surrender

/sə-ˈren-dər/

verb

1. to yield to the power, control, or possession of another upon compulsion or demand
2. to give oneself up into the power of another; to yield

SURRENDER

Surrender your heart to God, turn to him in prayer, and give up your sin—even those you do in secret. Then you won't be ashamed; you will be confident and fearless.

JOB 11:13-15 CEV

Several Christmases ago challenged my spirit. With five adults and one almost-adult under one roof, tensions ran high, and I found myself losing my joy among kids bickering, too many to-dos, not enough time, and a calendar full of obligations. I was operating from an empty emotional fuel tank and feeling the effects of burnout.

Several days after Christmas, my family and I were hosting a party for some of our closest friends and neighbors. When the team arrived to assemble a tent in our backyard, they did so during a deluge. Our town of Charlotte, North Carolina, had been experiencing what can only be described as “the days of Noah” for weeks, with even more rain in the forecast.

Admittedly, I became frazzled. I walked outside, under the tent, to reflect on the events of the recent holiday, along with my emotions during the past several days, including my disappointment with the soggy ground I was walking on. As I stood under the tent, something inside me broke. Amid the storm, I finally let my

heart listen closely to what God was saying, and I heard the still, small whisper, “Just surrender to Me, Anne.”

I sobbed uncontrollably and spent time under that tent repenting for spending Christmas so focused on tasks while completely missing the meaning and ultimately stripping away the joy—for myself and for others. When I rush from thing to thing to thing, I position myself as pacesetter, a goal achiever, a life planner instead of submitting that role to God. I need time and frequent reminders to place myself back where I belong—in submission to the Lord—to reposition myself into a posture of surrender.

As each new season brings its own challenges, my constant prayer and focus will be for my own surrender. Personally, I want to maintain that posture of surrender at the feet of the Lord to guide my home, my faith, my family, my work, and my marriage. And for my business, our team is prayerfully surrendering to the plans God has for me. Only by surrendering to Him and shedding our own plans and pride can we walk the path that God has planned for us.

What is God tugging at your heart right now to surrender? As you let go and let God into the many places you have surrendered, I pray you would feel His presence and His peace that passes all understanding.



Dear God, today I surrender, releasing my pride, my sin, and my plans, and I fall at Your feet in surrender. I know that sharing with You all the secret, ugly things I've been hiding will provide a new, confident stride in my step. Thank You for accepting me just as I am.



Foundation

/faʊn-'dā-shən/

noun

1. a basis, such as a tenet, principle, or axiom, upon which something stands or is supported
2. an underlying base or support
3. a body or ground upon which something is built up or overlaid

T E N

FOUNDATION

So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic."

ISAIAH 28:16

Laying a foundation is vital to structural integrity, and digging is an essential process of building faith.

Have you ever watched babies try to walk for the first time? Their feet are disproportionately small, and their steps are uncertain and nearly drunken. More often than not, their first steps end up in a face-plant and a goose egg. They have a shaky foundation.

Foundations aren't glamorous. Home and lifestyle magazines rarely highlight the artisanship of a home's foundation, but I assure you, the masterful design is there. To lay a foundation, builders must dig. Even in work as delicate as gardening, a seed cannot be planted or sprout without the gardener first digging out ground to nestle the seed in the dirt, planting its foundation.

We built our home more than seventeen years ago. I remember showing up during the digging process for the foundation to be laid. On-site, we received the bad news that one side of the land had "bad dirt" and that the construction workers would have to dig another ten feet deeper. However, our builder had

ordered "just enough" concrete for the usual foundation depth of two feet. As the day turned into night, the crew finished up the job, and we had just enough concrete—even with the gaping holes on the side of our foundation.

As I walked away, I felt Jesus tugging at my heart with a message that to have a strong spiritual foundation, we have to dig up all the "bad dirt" in our lives and hand it over to Him. When we invite Jesus to oversee the dirty work, real progress can be made to clear out the debris.

Twice in Isaiah, God is described as being a cornerstone and a sure foundation. "A tested stone, a precious cornerstone" (28:16), and "a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge" (33:6). The craftsmanship and intricate design work that can take place when there is no doubt in the solidity of a strong foundation is endless, and the Lord delights in creating and designing and adorning His children with His master handiwork.

I have had a lot of "bad dirt" to dig up and clear out in my life throughout these fifty-something years. My prayer is that we neither fear nor hide the dirt in our lives. That we not shy away from the digging process, but rather allow the Lord to do the work and lay a solid foundation of His grace and mercy.

Are there any cracks in your foundation? Is your cornerstone being tested? What needs to be dug up and cleared out that you could ask God's hand in?



Dear God, You have constructed a firm foundation for me. I know that You have laid the groundwork for beauty and joy throughout my life. Today I implore You to help me feel that solid footing wherever my path leads me.



Still

/stil/

adjective

1. devoid of or abstaining from motion
2. uttering no sound; quiet, subdued, muted
3. free from noise or turbulence; calm, tranquil

ELEVEN

STILL

The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.

EXODUS 14:14 ESV

I love traveling to New York City.

Well . . . I love traveling to New York City *for a few days at a time*. After that, I need to come home. The noise gets to me—the traffic, the construction, the honking, the people—constant noise that gets inside my head and drowns out everything else. Noise can cloud your judgment, distort your thoughts, and crowd out decisions.

Even while all alone, you can be surrounded by noise, with droning television shows, incoming texts, a crowded email in-box, a head full of toxic internal dialogue. It may seem impossible to just be quiet, but multiple times in the Bible, the Lord asks us to be still and quiet.

Thomas à Kempis powerfully stated, “Blessed are the ears that hear the pulse of the divine whisperer and give no heed to the many whisperings of the world.” How convicting! How many times have I missed the quiet nudging and promptings of the Holy Spirit because the world’s noise rang more loudly in my ears?

God doesn’t need to scream the loudest, because His Word is the most powerful. He doesn’t need to shout and demand and stomp because He *is*. He

is everything. There isn’t anything in the cosmos that speaks louder than His gentle voice.

The women on my team were joking that their bathroom showers are their most spiritual places because they’re the only quiet place in their houses. I encourage you to check the noise levels in your life. Find that quiet space—wherever it may be, both literally and figuratively. Remove yourself from the clanging ruckus that the world thrives on, and focus on the stillness and the quiet. There you will find His pulse and His voice cutting through the static and overcoming the noise.

When was the last time you were still? I invite you to take a moment to close your eyes and be still. Be silent. Notice God’s presence all around you.



Dear God, my life is full of too much noise and too much chaos and too much busyness. I am consumed by the things that are competing for my attention. Thank You for Your still, small voice that cuts through the noise directly to my heart. Today help me find the space to be still and silent before You so that I can rest in the peace You provide.