

Prov. 18:13, 15, 17-18: If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly & shame . . . ¹⁵ An intelligent heart [The heart of the discerning] acquires knowledge, & the ear of the wise seeks knowledge . . . ¹⁷ The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes & examines him. ¹⁸ The lot puts an end to quarrels & decides between powerful contenders.

Intro: Proverbs is about acquiring wisdom. Part of wisdom is discernment:

- **Webster's 1828 (Discernment):** The power or faculty of the mind, by which it distinguishes one thing from another, as truth from falsehood, virtue from vice; acuteness of judgment; power of perceiving differences of things or ideas, & their relations & tendencies. The errors of youth often proceed from the lack of discernment.

King Solomon: 1 Ki. 3:9-10, 16-28: Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good & evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?" It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this . . . ¹⁶ Then two prostitutes came to the king & stood before him. The one woman said, "Oh, my lord, this woman & I live in the same house, & I gave birth to a child while she was in the house. Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. & we were alone. There was no one else with us in the house; only we two were in the house. & this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him. & she arose at midnight & took my son from beside me, while your servant slept, & laid him at her breast, & laid her dead son at my breast. When I rose in the morning to nurse my child, behold, he was dead. But when I looked at him closely in the morning, behold, he was not the child that I had borne." But the other woman said, "No, the living child is mine, & the dead child is yours." The first said, "No, the dead child is yours, & the living child is mine." Thus they spoke before the king. Then the king said, "The one says, 'This is my son that is alive, & your son is dead'; & the other says, 'No; but your son is dead, & my son is the living one.'" & the king said, "Bring me a sword." So a sword was brought before the king. & the king said, "Divide the living child in two, & give half to the one & half to the other." Then the woman whose son was alive said to the king, because her heart yearned for her son, "Oh, my lord, give her the living child, & by no means put him to death." But the other said, "He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide him." Then the king answered & said, "Give the living child to the first woman, & by no means put him to death; she is his mother." & all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, & they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice.

In Christ, be slow to speak, quick to listen, & grow in discernment for God's glory.

1. Be Slow To Speak

Prov. 18:13: If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly & shame.

- **Prov. 15:28:** The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.

- **Prov. 20:25:** It is a snare to say rashly, "It is holy," & to reflect only after making vows.

a. Listen carefully to people: Focus on what people are saying. Hear their words. Stop thinking

about everything else when they are talking – focus in. You can't do two things at one time.

b. Don't be thinking about your response: When someone is talking, listen to them & what they are saying instead of thinking about what you are going to say in response.

c. Make sure you can repeat their argument or statements accurately: If you are in a dispute or disagreement, make sure you represent your opponent accurately. (Piper example: N. T. Wright)

d. Don't interrupt people when they are talking: It's not loving or helpful.

e. Don't talk too much: Let someone else speak. Learn from them. Be humble.

f. Maybe there is someone you have written off who you need to let speak into your life?: You may be surprised if you actually listen to their arguments.

David Hubbard: Folly it is, because we are not God; we have no power to read hearts. Shame it is, because we have treated the other person as an inferior; we have assumed that we are smart enough to know what they will say before they say it; we have treated them as less than a full person & have shamed & insulted ourselves by revealing our insensitivity & ignorance.

- **Jas. 1:19:** let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger

- **Jn. 7:46-51:** The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man!" The Pharisees answered them, "Have you also been deceived? Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed." Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, & who was one of them, said to them, "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing & learning what he does?" **GOSPEL!**

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2. Be Quick To Listen And Learn

Prov. 18:15: An intelligent heart [the heart of the discerning] acquires knowledge, & the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.

Wise people are hungry for knowledge, & they take action to seek it! They read. They study. They listen. They stick close to a mentor. They ask questions. They are humble. They work hard. They grow. They want to improve. Children: Ben Carson story – mom made him read all summer.

Eric Lane: a) Cultivate a discerning heart by appreciating the value of knowledge. This is what the parents try to instill by their patient instruction, part of which is to praise wisdom above all else.

b) Approach it with earnestness, seek it out, don't wait for it to come to you. Knowledge lies deep down on the ocean bed or in the bowels of the earth & has to be delved out.

c) Give it rapt [completely fascinated] attention – the heart will not acquire it unless the ears listen to it with concentration in order to understand & retain it. [Wise use of time; avocations]

3. Be Discerning For The Truth

Prov. 18:17: The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes & examines him.

a. You must listen to both sides of the story: In disputes, you need to listen to both sides of the story. If you hear someone say something about someone else that seems way out of character, you need to listen to both sides of the story. Before you make judgments about all kinds of breaking news stories, you need to listen to both sides of the story. [Solomon example; Potiphar's wife & Joseph ex.; Ahab, Jezebel, & Naboth ex.; Bethlehem Baptist Church organist immorality ex.]

How often do you side with the first account of events you hear (a friend's complaint, a social media post, a family member's version of events, a news story) without seeking the other side? In relationships, counseling, or leadership, we honor God by patiently examining both perspectives before deciding & making judgments.

b. Christians prize the truth above all: God is truth! Jesus is the truth! We love the truth!

- **Phil. 1:8-11:** For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. & it is my prayer that your love may abound more & more, with knowledge & all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, & so be pure & blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory & praise of God.

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4. Be Trusting In God To Show You The Truth

Prov. 18:18: The lot puts an end to quarrels & decides between powerful contenders.

Prov. 16:33: The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

a. What is a lot? Bruce Waltke: The lot was a small stone used to reveal God's selection of someone or something out of several possibilities where He kept people in the dark & desired their impartiality in the selection.

John Kitchen: Some believe that the high priest's use of the Urim & Thummim (Exod. 28:30; Deut. 33:8) was a form of casting lots.

- **Jonah 1:7:** they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us." So they cast lots, & the lot fell on Jonah.

- **Acts 1:24-26:** they prayed & said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry & apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." & they cast lots for them, & the lot fell on Matthias, & he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

b. Is using the lot for today? We never see it used in the Bible after Pentecost.

- **Jay Adams:** There is a lazy, superstitious use of the lot & other such means that is not recommended here. The use of the lot . . . ought never to supersede biblical commandments & the

application of scriptural principles . . . When, having followed biblical injunctions to their limit you are left with several options, all of which are acceptable to God, the lot may be used to decide among them . . . But where there is biblical direction, the lot should never replace obedience to it.

c. The lot can be used to end quarrels: Prov. 18:18: The lot puts an end to quarrels & decides between powerful contenders.

John Kitchen: The lot “decides” between . . . factions . . . Here, the warring factions can be peacefully separated, pulled apart & put at peace with one another.

d. In all the means we use to end disagreements, we ultimately trust in God: Whether it’s counseling or Christian arbitration or church elders or lots or whatever, we trust in God!

- **John Kitchen:** Today, this side of the Cross & Pentecost, when God’s people reach a relational impasse, they should turn to the principles of God’s written word & the guidance of the Holy Spirit, mediated through mature & spiritually minded believers (1 Cor. 6:1-8). But, even here & now, both parties must believe that God will work through these means or no peace will be found.

- **Derek Kidner:** In His will is our peace: The Christian equivalent of the implied advice of this proverb is to seek God’s leading, when interests or opinions clash, & to accept it with a good grace

Consider Jesus Christ: One greater than Solomon is here! Jesus is more wise, more discerning, more just than anyone who’s ever lived! He Who made the tongue was slow to speak! He Who knew all things, learned & increased in wisdom & in stature & in favor with God & man! He Who is the way, the truth, & the life, came discerning like no man ever discerned! He Who determines the decision of every lot cast (& determines all things!) chose you to be His beloved child & has written down your days for you before any one of them came to pass – for your everlasting good & for His glory! There’s no one like Jesus! His wisdom & discernment are past finding out!

- **Matt. 22:41-46:** Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, "'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet"'? If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?" & no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

- **Lk. 20:22-26:** Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" But he perceived their craftiness, & said to them, "Show me a denarius. Whose likeness & inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's." He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, & to God the things that are God's." & they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him in what he said, but marveling at his answer they became silent.

- **Lk. 20:37-40:** "But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham & the God of Isaac & the God of Jacob. Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him." Then some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well." For they no longer dared to ask him any question. **[Died; Rose!]**

Christ Jesus All Does Wise Discern
Wonderful Counselor Strives To Learn
Who Knows All Things With Deep Concern
All Knowledge Owns And Every Turn
He's God And Man The Judge Adjourn
He Rules The Lot And Makes It Turn
All Things Ordains From Bow To Stern
Even Death That We All Earn
He Took And Bore God's Angry Burn
In Wrath He Died - God's Curse To Turn
Away From You And Make You Yearn
For Him Who Rose The Grave To Spurn
By Faith Alone We're Just – He'd Earn
A Righteousness For Us – Now Burn
All For His Glory And Discern
With Knowledge, Wisdom We Will Learn
And Be Prepared For His Return!

In Christ, be slow to speak, quick to listen, & grow in discernment for God's glory.