

Job 28
September 13, 2026

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Where do people typically look for guidance when they face a difficult decision? [Let people engage]

Transition: The Bible addresses this very question. In today's chapter, we find Job asking "But where shall wisdom be found?" (Job 28:12) "Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell?" (v. 20) Job asked these questions because he was weary of the cliches and platitudes that his three friends were giving him in the name of "wisdom." His friends were sure that their words were pure gold, but Job concluded they were trash. The three men had *knowledge*, but they lacked *wisdom*.

Let's read the text and learn that we should not only seek guidance, but HOW and FROM whom we should seek it. Let's begin.

BOOK:

28 "There is a mine for silver
and a place where gold is refined.
² Iron is taken from the earth,
and copper is smelted from ore.
³ Man puts an end to the darkness;
he searches the farthest recesses
for ore in the blackest darkness.
⁴ Far from where people dwell he cuts a shaft,
in places forgotten by the foot of man;
far from men he dangles and sways.
⁵ The earth, from which food comes,
is transformed below as by fire;
⁶ sapphires come from its rocks,
and its dust contains nuggets of gold.
⁷ No bird of prey knows that hidden path,
no falcon's eye has seen it.
⁸ Proud beasts do not set foot on it,
and no lion prowls there.
⁹ Man's hand assaults the flinty rock
and lays bare the roots of the mountains.
¹⁰ He tunnels through the rock;
his eyes see all its treasures.
¹¹ He searches (or dams up) the sources of the rivers
and brings hidden things to light.
¹² "But where can wisdom be found?

Where does understanding dwell?

¹³ Man does not comprehend its worth;
it cannot be found in the land of the living.

¹⁴ The deep says, 'It is not in me';
the sea says, 'It is not with me.'

¹⁵ It cannot be bought with the finest gold,
nor can its price be weighed in silver.

¹⁶ It cannot be bought with the gold of Ophir,
with precious onyx or sapphires.

¹⁷ Neither gold nor crystal can compare with it,
nor can it be had for jewels of gold.

¹⁸ Coral and jasper are not worthy of mention;
the price of wisdom is beyond rubies.

¹⁹ The topaz of Cush cannot compare with it;
it cannot be bought with pure gold.

²⁰ "Where then does wisdom come from?
Where does understanding dwell?

²¹ It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing,
concealed even from the birds of the air.

²² Destruction and Death say,
'Only a rumor of it has reached our ears.'

²³ God understands the way to it
and he alone knows where it dwells,

²⁴ for he views the ends of the earth
and sees everything under the heavens.

²⁵ When he established the force of the wind
and measured out the waters,

²⁶ when he made a decree for the rain
and a path for the thunderstorm,

²⁷ then he looked at wisdom and appraised it;
he confirmed it and tested it.

²⁸ And he said to man,
'The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom,
and to shun evil is understanding.' "

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What stood out to you? What questions do you have? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about man? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit? [Let people engage]

Q: What is your takeaway? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Wisdom demands a reoriented foundation. The chapter opens with vivid imagery of human ingenuity—mining silver and gold from deep within the earth, searching through darkness and remote places ([Job 28:1–13](#)). Yet after describing humanity’s remarkable capacity to extract material treasures, the text pivots sharply: “But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell? Man does not comprehend its worth; it cannot be found in the land of the living.” ([Job 28:1–13](#)) The contrast is intentional. Humans excel at acquiring earthly wealth through effort and intelligence, but wisdom cannot be purchased with gold, silver, precious onyx, sapphires, or any material value—its worth exceeds all rubies ([Job 28:15–23](#)). This teaches that intellectual achievement and material success don’t automatically produce wisdom.

Fear of God becomes the gateway to understanding. The passage concludes: “The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.” ([Job 28:28](#)) This fear is not horror or mere respect, but awe—a kind of reverent wonder in the presence of God’s vastly superior power. It removes pride and replaces it with humility, which is prerequisite to wisdom.¹ Biblical wisdom is not a body of knowledge but a relationship—the wise maintain a dependent relationship with God that makes them listen to him, and all true knowledge has reference to God.¹

Practical living flows from this reorientation. The essence of wisdom involves both fearing God—venerating and submitting to him—and rejecting evil, living according to God’s standards of holiness.² This faith-based wisdom isn’t restricted to “sacred” parts of life but explores the whole of existence as God made it, including mining, technology, mineralogy, and exploration.³ The application is holistic: genuine understanding reshapes how we approach every dimension of life, from our professional pursuits to our moral choices.

1. Tremper Longman III, ed., [Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Job](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), [333–334](#).
2. Roy B. Zuck, [“Job,”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), [1:751](#).
3. Craig G. Bartholomew and Ryan P. O’Dowd, [Old Testament Wisdom Literature: A Theological Introduction](#) (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham: IVP Academic; Apollos, 2011), [183](#).

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W.W. (1996). *Be Patient*. (pp. 106-109) Victor Books

3. Job seeks God's wisdom (Job 28)

"But where shall wisdom be found?" (Job 28:12) "Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell?" (v. 20, NIV) Job asked these questions because he was weary of the clichés and platitudes that his three friends were giving him in the name of "wisdom." His friends were sure that their words were pure gold, but Job concluded they were tinsel and trash. The three men had *knowledge*, but they lacked *wisdom*.

"Wisdom is the right use of knowledge," said Charles Spurgeon. "To know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal, and are all the greater fools for it. There is no fool so great a fool as the knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom."

In this poem about wisdom, Job gives three answers to his question, "Where shall wisdom be found?"

You cannot mine wisdom (Job 28:1–11). Job takes us deep into the earth where brave men are mining gold, iron, copper, and precious stones. Precious metals and precious stones are often used in Scripture as symbols of wisdom (Prov. 2:1–10; 3:13–15; 8:10–21; 1 Cor. 3:12–23). Once you have found it, you must "refine" it in the furnace and "mint" it for practical use. Paul said that the opposite of God's wisdom is man's wisdom—"wood, hay, and stubble"—materials that are not beautiful, durable, or valuable (1 Cor. 3:12). You can find wood, hay, and stubble on the surface of the earth; but if you want real treasures, you must dig deep.

Job describes how men work hard and face great danger to find material wealth. They tunnel through hard rock and risk their lives to get rich. *Why will men and women not put that much effort into gaining God's wisdom?* The Word of God is like a deep mine, filled with precious treasures; but the believer must put forth effort to discover its riches. It takes careful reading and study, prayer, meditation, and obedience to mine the treasures of the Word of God; and the Holy Spirit of God is willing to assist us. Why are we so negligent when this great wealth lies so near at hand?

Though man can dig deep into the earth and find great wealth, though he can go places where birds and beasts would not dare to go, though he can even find the hidden sources of the great rivers, *man cannot find God's wisdom by mere human efforts*. It takes more than courage and native intelligence; it demands humility and spiritual perception.

The fact that a person succeeds admirably in one area of life doesn't mean he or she is qualified to speak about other areas of life. Advertisers use athletes to sell razors and automobiles, or actors and actresses to sell medicine. When famous scientists (who have never studied the Bible) speak authoritatively about spiritual things, their opinion is as valuable as that of any other untrained amateur theologian.

You cannot buy wisdom (Job 28:12–19). Modern society thinks that anything can be obtained or accomplished if only you have enough money. Government agencies ask for a bigger slice of the annual budget so they can do a better job of fighting crime, ending pollution, providing jobs, and building a better environment. While a certain amount of money is necessary to survive in

modern society, money is not the do-all and be-all that the world says it is. It's good to enjoy the things money can buy (1 Tim. 6:17) *if you don't lose the things that money can't buy.*

In these verses, Job mentions gold five times, silver once, and names seven different precious stones; yet none of these treasures individually, nor all of them collectively, can purchase the wisdom of God. The real problem is that *man doesn't comprehend the price of wisdom and thinks he can get it cheaply* (Job 28:13). “[Wisdom] is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her” (Prov. 3:15, NKJV). True wisdom is expensive. It is not received automatically just because you listen to a cassette tape, attend a seminar, or listen to a dynamic speaker.

Wisdom comes only from God (Job 28:20–28). Go as high as the birds can fly, and you won't find wisdom there. Go as deep as Abaddon and death, and wisdom is not there. Only God knows where to find wisdom, for God sees everything. (He doesn't have to dig into the earth to see what's there!) God has the wisdom to adjust the pressure of the wind and measure the amount of water in the atmosphere. If these proportions were changed, what disturbances in nature might result! God knows how to control the rain and guide the storm as it moves across the earth. Flashes of lightning and peals of thunder may seem arbitrary to us, but God controls even the lightning and thunder.

Job answers his where-is-wisdom question in Job 28:28: “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding” (see Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10). This was God's description of Job (Job 1:8; 2:3); so, in spite of what his friends said about him, *Job was a man of wisdom.*

What is “the fear of the Lord”? It is loving reverence for God, who He is, what He says, and what He does (Mal. 2:5–6). It is not a fear that paralyzes, but one that energizes. When you fear the Lord, you obey His commandments (Ecc. 12:13), walk in His ways (Deut. 8:6), and serve Him (Josh. 24:14). You are loyal to Him and give Him wholehearted service (2 Chron. 19:9). Like Job, when you fear the Lord, you depart from evil (Prov. 3:7–8). The “fear of the Lord” is the fear that conquers fear (Ps. 112); for if you fear God, you need not fear anyone else (Matt. 10:26–31).

So, the first step toward true wisdom is a reverent and respectful attitude toward God, which also involves a humble attitude toward ourselves. *Personal pride is the greatest barrier to spiritual wisdom.* “When pride comes, then comes shame; but with the humble is wisdom” (Prov. 11:2, NKJV).

The next step is to ask God for wisdom (James 1:5) and make diligent use of the means He gives us for securing His wisdom, especially knowing and doing the Word of God (Matt. 7:21–29). It is not enough merely to study; we must also obey what God tells us to do (John 7:17). As we walk by faith, we discover the wisdom of God in the everyday things of life. Spiritual wisdom is not abstract; it is very personal and very practical.

As we fellowship with other believers in the church and share with one another, we can learn wisdom. Reading the best books can also help us grow in wisdom and understanding. The

important thing is that we focus on Christ, for He is our wisdom (1 Cor. 1:24) and in Him is hidden “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). The better we know Christ and the more we become like Him, the more we will walk in wisdom and understand the will of the Lord. We must allow the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of our heart so we can see God in His Word and understand more of the riches we have in Christ (Eph. 1:15–23).

Job’s speech is not yet finished. In the next three chapters, Job will review his life and then challenge God to either vindicate him or judge him. That will end the debate and usher in two new participants—Elihu and the Lord.

Zuck, R. B. (1985). *Job*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 750-751) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

c. Job’s discussion of God’s wisdom (chap. 28)

In this chapter Job affirmed people’s inability to ascertain God’s wisdom fully, in contrast with the triad of antagonists who claimed they knew what God was doing in Job’s life. Though seemingly an isolated chapter (which some say was spoken by one of the three, by God, or by an unnamed spokesman), this discourse does agree with Job’s earlier words about man’s inability to know God’s wisdom and with Job’s words about God’s sovereignty over death and nature (cf. 28:24–27 with 26:5–13).

28:1–11. Men search for numerous metals underground (vv. 1–2—**silver ... gold.... iron ... copper**—and precious gems such as **sapphires** (v. 6; cf. v. 16). (Though the Iron Age began about 1200 b.c., when tools were commonly manufactured from iron, iron was known long before that; cf., e.g., Gen. 4:22.) Miners dig shafts in **the darkness** underground and dangle from ropes to reach remote areas. Beneath its surface **the earth**, overturned by miners at work, is in rubble as if it had been burned.

Birds with keen sight and stealthy animals cannot see or walk on the underground treasure troves. In his mining operations, man hammers away at the rocks, digs **tunnels**, and even finds where **rivers** begin which he must dam up (NIV). As a result, he is able to bring **hidden** underground **things to light**. These verses are arranged in an interesting structure (as suggested by David J. Clark, “In Search of Wisdom: Notes on Job 28,” *The Bible Translator* 33. October 1982:401–5):

- a. Getting valuable metals from the earth (Job 28:1–2)
- b. Going underground (v. 3)
- c. Remoteness of the mines (unseen by people, v. 4)
- a’. Getting valuable metals and gems from the earth (vv. 5–6)
- c’. Remoteness of the mines (unseen by birds and animals, vv. 7–8)
- b’. Going underground (v. 9)
- a”. Getting valuable metals from the earth (vv. 10–11).

28:12–19. In spite of man’s technological skills, he cannot find, unaided, the greatest treasure of all, **wisdom**. Its value is not fully known by **man** (*’ēnôš*, “weak, mortal man”; cf. comments on

4:17). He can discover other hidden treasures under the earth's surface (28:4, 10), but he **cannot** discover wisdom in the inhabited earth (**the land of the living**) or in any ocean. Nor can wisdom be purchased in a market with other precious metals and jewels man has uncovered (**gold ... silver.... onyx ... sapphires.... crystal.... coral ... jasper ... rubies, or topaz**), for **wisdom** far exceeds their value (cf. Prov. 3:13–15; 8:11; 16:16).

28:20–27. After repeating the two questions Job asked before (v. 20; cf. v. 12), he affirmed that no animal, person, or bird can see **wisdom** (just as one cannot see mountain-hidden metals, vv. 4, 7–8). And just as the sea does not know where wisdom is obtainable (v. 14), neither do **Destruction** (“Abaddon,” NIV; cf. 26:6) nor **Death** know. The only One who knows is **God**, for **He** is omnipresent (He **sees** what animals, people, and birds are unable to see, 28:7, 21). In creating the universe, God determined the elements; **the force** (lit., “weight”) **of the wind**, the amount of water, the **decree** (i.e., limit) **for the rain**, and where each **thunderstorm** would occur. In His creative genius, **He** saw and valued **wisdom** (cf. Prov. 8:27–30), in contrast with man's inability to do so (cf. Job 28:12–13).

Verses 12–27 have an interesting arrangement:

- a. Inaccessibility of wisdom (vv. 12–14)
- b. Wisdom's value beyond [gold, silver] jewels (vv. 15–19)
- a'. Inaccessibility of wisdom (vv. 20–22)
- b'. Wisdom's value known by God (vv. 23–27).

28:28. God told **man** (‘*ādām*, “mankind”) that the essence of **wisdom** is to **fear** (“venerate and submit to”) **the Lord**, even when man cannot understand His ways, and **to reject evil**, living in accord with God's standards of holiness. Honoring God (the positive) involves hating sin (the negative; Prov. 8:13). Job's accusers had insisted that he was not fearing God or eschewing sin and that therefore he was not wise. In Job 28 he argued the opposite: *he* was fearing God and hating evil (as God Himself had already said of Job, 1:1, 8; 2:3), but *they* were not! Therefore wisdom and **understanding** were his, not theirs.

This closing verse also links these words of Job with chapter 29, in which he cited evidences that he revered the Lord, and with chapter 31, in which he enumerated evidences that he was not involved in sin.

Garrett, D. A. (1998). *The Poetic and Wisdom Books*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (pp. 209-210). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Hymn to Wisdom (28:1–28). This poem may be regarded as Job's own words or the author's own transition. It differs from its context and does not begin with the phrase “And Job said.” The text does not, however, suggest that these were not Job's words. Either way the interpretation of the chapter is only slightly altered.

The poem contrasts human technical skill in mining out precious metals and gems with the inaccessibility of wisdom. The human condition is indeed pitiful. Although adept at tunneling into the deepest recesses of the earth for treasure, humans are neither willing nor able to penetrate the mysteries of life itself.

The poem concludes with what may be called the heart of biblical wisdom, “The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom.” For Job this became far more than a cliché. The former, calm assurance that he understood life had been shattered. The old order of his life was in ruins. He now had to look to God and not to his own wisdom about God.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Job28). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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