

## WISDOM CALLS

Have you ever met a “wise guy,” a person who has the answer to the world’s problems, even before he (or she, the lexeme “guy” embeds “gal” these days) has heard the questions? The person may also be called a “wise acre” or “smart aleck” because the person is “an obnoxiously conceited and self-assertive person with pretensions to smartness or cleverness” (Merriam-Webster). Wise guys do not have wisdom and are not “wise” in the Biblical sense of the word.

Solomon was a wise man because he prayed for wisdom—and God granted it to him. In 1 Kings 3:16-28, we read the story of how he judged a difficult case involving two women with newborn babies. The problem was that one of the babies was dead—the mother had rolled on it in bed—and she claimed it belonged to the other mother. When the women came to Solomon for a judgment on who really owned the dead baby he said (in effect) “Don’t worry about it—I’ll just cut the living baby in half and you can each have your part.” Of course, the rightful mother objected and was willing to give it to the deceitful woman so that the baby would not be killed. Solomon saw immediately who really owned the baby.

Wisdom is like that, or rather people with wisdom are like that. They know how to judge good and evil and the wisdom they have is what they try to live by. Solomon was a young man and was following in the steps of his father David. He knew God had blessed his father and he wanted God’s blessing as well. But he didn’t pray for fame or fortune—he prayed for wisdom (see 1 Kings 3 again). The Lord was “pleased” that Solomon asked for wisdom and said, “*I will give you more wisdom and understanding than anyone has ever had before or will ever have again*” (v. 12). It didn’t stop there: because Solomon wanted wisdom more than anything else God also gave him more wealth and honor than any other king.

All my life I have prayed for wisdom and I have needed it. As a resident of a Kewa village in Papua New Guinea, I was often called upon to give my opinion on various matters. We were learning the language and culture so I could easily have said or done the wrong thing—which sometimes happened. But more often God gave me good judgment and sense and I could help in a bad situation.

In my opinion, one of the most beautiful chapters in the Bible is Proverbs chapter 8. It is poetic, with Christ personified as “Wisdom.” We believe it is Christ because, as wisdom, he was “*the first of works, long ago*” (v. 22) and was beside God in creation, “*like an architect*” (v. 30), establishing the horizon, clouds, the earth and fields, and the boundaries of the sea.

In this chapter we find wisdom “*calling out*” to us—to humankind—so that we can “*learn to have sense*” (v.5). What is offered is better than the finest gold or silver (v. 19), so it would seem hard to come by. No, because “*whoever looks for me [wisdom] can find me*” as well as “*riches and honor...prosperity and success*” (v.18). Every good thing we have comes from God, including our very life (v. 35).

When we read Internet, newspaper, and listen to TV, I pray for wisdom. We have an acquaintance who claims that face masks are ineffective, and that she has done “research” to prove it. Her response is contradicted by scientists who have spent their lives studying viruses. My council and wisdom is to believe the scientists.

On our farm, we had a cream separator. We put whole milk into a bowl attached to a machine that had a crank. When we cranked and spun a bowl with its disks, the centrifugal force imposed on the whole milk would loosen the cream, which we then used most often to make butter, but what was left behind was skimmed milk. We fed it to the pigs.

Perhaps a wisdom separator would help us. We could take the information given to us from the Internet, newspapers and TV that goes into our mind (the bowl) and turn the crank of wisdom. We should get some good out of the process and what is left may be simply foolish information.

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Turning the Crank