



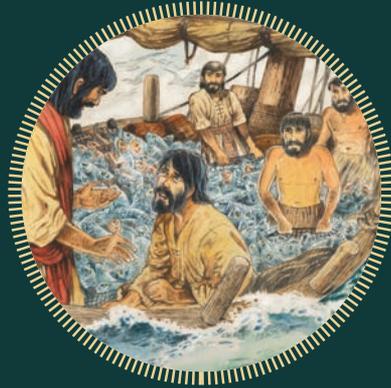
God's Wisdom



SALLY MICHAEL

“Teaches biblical wisdom in a way that is clear, fun, and engaging for children.” —Marty Machowski

God's Wisdom



Making HIM Known

God's Names

God's Promise

God's Providence

God's Wisdom

God's Wisdom

BY SALLY MICHAEL



P U B L I S H I N G

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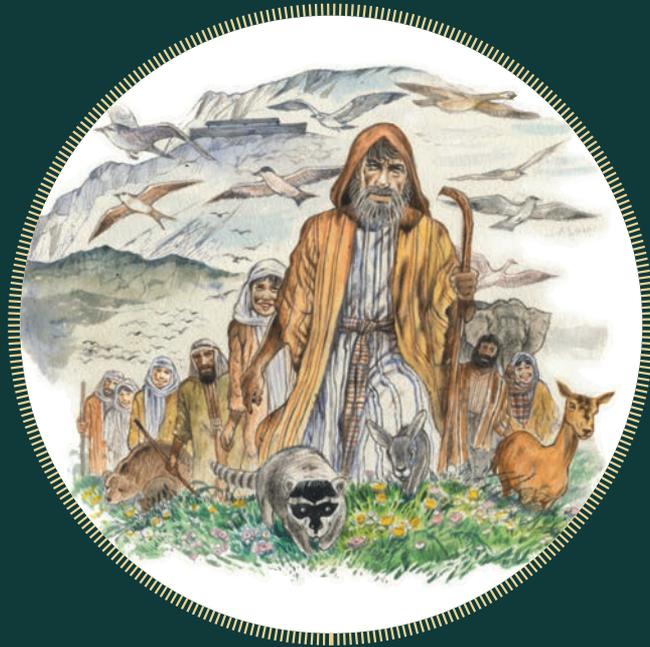
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Dedicated to
David Glenn House.

May you walk in God's wisdom
all the days of your life
and follow Jesus
on the path that leads to life.



Blessed is the one who finds wisdom,
and the one who gets understanding,
for the gain from her is better than gain from silver
and her profit better than gold.

She is more precious than jewels,
and nothing you desire can compare with her.

Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honor.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
and all her paths are peace.

She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her;
those who hold her fast are called blessed.

—Proverbs 3:13–18

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Preface | 9 |
| Introduction: How to Use This Book | 12 |
| 1. Jesus Is the Sure Foundation | 16 |
| 2. Two Paths | 20 |
| 3. Wisdom and Foolishness | 24 |
| 4. Wisdom Is a Treasure | 28 |
| 5. Run from Foolishness | 32 |
| 6. The Mocking Fool | 36 |
| 7. The Rebellious Fool | 40 |
| 8. The Godless Fool | 44 |
| 9. The Simple Fool | 48 |
| 10. Foolishness Leads to Destruction | 52 |
| 11. Driving Out Folly | 56 |
| 12. Get Wisdom | 60 |
| 13. Fearing God: Who He Is | 64 |
| 14. Fearing God: What He Is Like—Perfect in Everything | 68 |
| 15. Fearing God: What He Is Like—Amazing Love | 72 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 16. Imitating God..... | 76 |
| 17. The Wise Seek Knowledge | 80 |
| 18. The Wise Love God’s Commands | 84 |
| 19. The Wise Hate Evil | 88 |
| 20. The Wise Listen to Advice..... | 92 |
| 21. The Wise Accept Correction | 96 |
| 22. The Wise Have Self-Control | 100 |
| 23. The Wise Look Ahead..... | 104 |
| 24. The Wise Trust God..... | 108 |
| 25. The End of the Path..... | 112 |
| 26. Jesus Is the Bridge | 116 |



Preface

*How much better to get wisdom than gold!
To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.
—Proverbs 16:16*

What a beautiful picture of wisdom is painted in the book of Proverbs! Wisdom is a great treasure; more precious than jewels and more profitable to the human soul than silver or gold. Yet in spite of the beauty and value of wisdom, the human heart is naturally bent toward foolishness due to our sin nature inherited from our father Adam. How we need the work of Christ on the cross to subdue our sin nature and set our feet on the path of wisdom!

Every day our children are confronted with the call of wisdom and the call of foolishness. Which call will they answer? Will they be attracted to the foolishness of rebellion against God and His ways? Or will they embrace Christ and understand the wisdom and protection of God's commands? Will they willfully follow the course of this world and shut God out of their lives? Or will they come to fear the Lord and hate evil? Will they stubbornly insist on following their own counsel? Or will they humbly listen to advice and accept correction? Will they blindly follow their sinful urges? Or will they exhibit self-control and look ahead to the consequences of their choices and actions? Which path will our children travel through life—the life-giving path of wisdom or the destructive path of foolishness?

Our children are born on the path of foolishness, naturally inclined to resist loving what is good and right (Proverbs 22:15). With their natural attraction toward foolishness, how will they learn to treasure wisdom, follow its counsel, and walk in the way of the wise?

Loving wisdom and what is good and right begins with the work of God in the heart. The desire and strength to reject the path of foolishness comes from

knowing God, who is the source of wisdom. When God inclines a child's heart to be in awe of His greatness and goodness, the result is the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom.

**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. (Proverbs 9:10)**

Only Jesus is the bridge from the path of foolishness to the path of wisdom. When children embrace Jesus, the Light in a dark world, they will begin to treasure wisdom and walk in its ways.

You have been given the high calling of introducing your child to Jesus Christ and imparting the words of life-giving wisdom. May you and your child discover together the joys of wisdom and the destruction of foolishness in the pages of this book, which is based on the Book of all books, God's Holy Word. May your authentic example of trusting God, and your diligent instruction of His character and His ways, incline your child's heart to love the way of wisdom. And may the glimpses of our great and glorious God draw your child to fear the Lord and walk in all His ways.

**My son, be attentive to my words;
incline your ear to my sayings.
Let them not escape from your sight;
keep them within your heart.
For they are life to those who find them,
and healing to all their flesh.
Keep your heart with all vigilance,
for from it flow the springs of life.
Put away from you crooked speech,
and put devious talk far from you.**

Let your eyes look directly forward,
and your gaze be straight before you.
Ponder the path of your feet;
then all your ways will be sure.
Do not swerve to the right or to the left;
turn your foot away from evil. (Proverbs 4:20–27)

My son, keep your father's commandment,
and forsake not your mother's teaching.
Bind them on your heart always;
tie them around your neck.
When you walk, they will lead you;
when you lie down, they will watch over you;
and when you awake, they will talk with you.
For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light,
and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life. (Proverbs 6:20–23)

Introduction

How to Use This Book

This book was written to give parents an opportunity to present solid truth to their children and to encourage real-life application of that truth.

Relational

Children receive more encouragement to learn when truth is presented by a trusted individual. Your positive, relational parent-child commitment will be a real benefit when you sit down together to read this book. Your time together over the Word should be positive, affirming, and loving.

Interactive

There is a greater impact when an individual *discovers* truth instead of just hearing it presented. Many questions have been incorporated into the text of this book to encourage your child to wonder and think critically. The process of discovery will be circumvented if you don't give your child adequate time to think and respond. After asking a question, wait for a response. If your child has difficulty, ask the question in a different way or give a few hints.

Questions and responses can be springboards for more questions and discovery as you interact with your child's mind and heart. The Holy Spirit is the real teacher, so depend on Him to give both you and your child thoughts and truths to explore together, and to bring the necessary understanding. Take the time to work through each story at a leisurely pace—giving time for interaction and further dialogue. The goal should be to get the material into the child, not just to get the child through the material.

Understandable

These stories have been written with attention given to explaining difficult or potentially new concepts. Some of these concepts may take time for your child to digest. Allow your child to ponder new truths. Read the story more than once, allowing the truth to be better understood and integrated into your child's theological framework. At times, have your child read parts of the lesson, giving an opportunity for visual learning.

Because vocabulary can be child-specific, define the particular words foreign to your child. Retell difficult sections in familiar wording, and ask questions to be sure your child understands the truth being taught.

Theological

More than just acquainting your child with an understanding of wisdom, this book is building a foundation of biblical theology for your child. As your child begins to correctly understand who God is and the wisdom of His ways, he or she won't just have a vague notion of God, but will be able to relate to the God of the Bible.

Because the Word of God has convicting and converting power, Bible texts are quoted word for word in some parts. Some of these verses may be beyond the child's understanding, so you may want to explain unfamiliar words or thoughts. Even though clear comprehension may be difficult, hearing the Word itself is a means that the Holy Spirit often uses to encourage faith in your child (Romans 10:17). Do not minimize the effectual influence of God's Word in the tender souls of children.

Since the Word of God is living and active, allow the child to read the actual Bible verses as much as possible. Also, encourage your child to memorize some of the verses so he or she can meditate on them at other times.

The gospel is presented numerous times throughout the book. Use this as an opportunity to share God's work of grace in your life, and to converse with

your child about his or her spiritual condition. Be careful not to confuse spiritual interest with converting faith, and take care to avoid giving premature assurances. Fan the flames of gospel-inspired conviction and tenderness toward the sacrificial love of Jesus without prematurely encouraging your child to pray “the sinner’s prayer.”¹

Application

Understanding the truth is essential, but understanding alone is insufficient. Truth must also be embraced in the heart and acted upon in daily life. Often, children cannot make the connection between a biblical truth and real-life application, so you, the parent, must help bridge the gap.

Consider the following quotation by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones:

We must always put things in the right order, and it is Truth first. . . . The heart is always to be influenced through the understanding—the mind, then the heart, then the will. . . . But God forbid that anyone should think that it ends with the intellect. It starts there, but it goes on. It then moves the heart and finally the man yields his will. He obeys, not grudgingly or unwillingly, but with the whole heart. The Christian life is a glorious perfect life that takes up and captivates the entire personality.²

Spend a few days or even a week on each story. Reread the story, discuss the truths, and follow the suggestions in the Learning to Trust God section. Most importantly, help your child to see that God is who He says He is, and help him or her to act in response to the truth. Point out God’s involvement in daily life,

1. Some excellent resources for parents regarding the salvation of children can be found at www.children-desiring-god.org, including a booklet titled *Helping Children to Understand the Gospel* and two seminars from the 2007 Children Desiring God conference, How Great a Salvation—“Leading Children to a Solid Faith” and “Presenting the Gospel to Children.”

2. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1965), 61–62.

thank Him for being true to His Word, and ask him to grant us a measure of His wisdom as we seek to walk and live in his ways.

Prayer

Ultimately, our efforts are effective only if the Holy Spirit breathes on our teaching and quickens it to the heart. Pray not only before going through the stories, but also in the succeeding days, that your child would see God's character expressed in His Word, learn to live by His wisdom, and respond to Him in faith.

Jesus Is the Sure Foundation

Suppose you want to build a house from blocks. You can't just build the house in the air. You have to build it on something, on a foundation. Would it be better to build your house on a table, or on a ball? Why?

It would be very foolish to build your house on a ball, wouldn't it? Even if you built the house well, just one small roll of the ball could make the house tumble down. But a table is strong and stable. It is a good foundation for a house of blocks.

Jesus told a story about two men who built houses and the foundations they used. One man was wise and built his house on a rock foundation. The other was foolish and built his house on the sand. Do you know what happened to the two houses when the rain came and the wind blew? The house on the rock stood firm. But the house on the sand **"fell, and great was the fall of it"** (Matthew 7:24–27).

Would you rather be like the wise man or the foolish man? Jesus said wise people are those who hear His words and put them into practice. They are like the man who built his house on a rock. They have a sure, strong foundation for life. But those who hear the Word of God and do not practice it—do not obey it—are foolish like the man who built his house on the sand. Their foundation isn't good. It's shaky and weak, and someday they will fall with a great crash.

Adam and Eve had a good foundation. They had a relationship with the living God. They walked and talked with Him. He gave them all they needed. He was their Creator, Protector, and Provider. He was also their Ruler, telling them to live in obedience to Him. God was the solid, sure, strong foundation for Adam and Eve.

But they were like the foolish man who hears the Word of God and does not practice it. They chose to step off the sure foundation of trusting God, and they disobeyed God and turned away from His rule. They foolishly chose the sandy

foundation of sin, selfishness, pride, and disobedience. And “great was the fall” of Adam and Eve . . . and of all people because

by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners. (Romans 5:19)

Adam’s disobedience brought sin into the world, and those born after him were born in sin.¹ Here is one way to understand this:

Cows have baby . . . cows.

Dogs have baby . . . dogs.

Sinners have baby . . . sinners.



1. With the exception of Jesus.

Horses are never born to cows, and cats are never born to dogs. Cows have baby cows, horses have baby horses. So sinners have baby sinners. Just like “cow-ness” or “cow nature” is passed on from the mother and father cow to the baby, so sin nature is passed on from Adam and Eve to their children, who pass it on to their children, who pass it on to their children . . . to us. So we are born with a sin nature. We are born on a shaky foundation of pride, selfishness, and disobedience—a foundation of sin.

But God made a way of rescue from the sandy foundation.

For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:19)

Just as sin came through one man, Adam, rescue from sin and foolishness and a sandy foundation came through one man—one man who obeyed God perfectly, had no sin, paid the price for foolishness and disobedience, and died for undeserving sinners. Do you know who that man is?

He is Jesus, the sinless, perfect Son of God. Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment for sin, to rescue man from his foolish, sinful heart, and to place those who trust in Him on a strong, sure foundation. Through one man came sin, and through one man, Jesus, came salvation from sin.

People build their lives on all kinds of foundations. Their foundations are the things they trust in—like money, friendships, good looks, possessions, or abilities like being good at sports or music. These are shaky, sandy foundations. When the rains of problems and the winds of death come, these foundations wash away. They can’t last.

But there is one foundation that is solid and will not wash away. That foundation can stand the rains of problems and the winds of death. It is a sure, strong, solid foundation, and it is the *only* sure, strong, solid foundation for life.

For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:11)

Trusting in Jesus is the sure foundation for rescue from sin and the power to live in obedience to God, practicing His Word. Wise people build their lives trusting in Jesus; foolish people grab on to sandy foundations. What is your foundation? Do you want to be wise or foolish?



LEARNING TO TRUST GOD

- ✦ Read the story of the wise man and the foolish man in Matthew 7:24–27. Is just knowing about God enough to save you? What are some of the “**words of mine**” that Jesus talked about?
- ✦ Read Philippians 3:3–9. What are the two foundations Paul talks about in these verses? What is the difference between these foundations? What is “**faith in Christ**”?
- ✦ **Activity:** Try building something on different kinds of foundations. How important is the foundation? As a family, think of a way you can tell someone about the sure foundation of faith in Jesus and then follow through this week (e.g., tell them the gospel story, show them a movie with a gospel message, write a note, etc.).

Every day our children are confronted with the call
of wisdom and the call of foolishness.

Which call will they answer?

All of us, down to the youngest child, start out on the path of foolishness because we are *born* with foolishness in our hearts. Only God can incline your child's heart toward the path of wisdom—and he can use your example and diligent instruction to do it.

Through these teachings and stories from the Bible, Sally Michael describes for parents and children the characteristics of the foolish and the wise, contrasts for them the way of wisdom with the way of foolishness, and shows them the end result of each path.

Explore these two paths with your own child, and let the words of Proverbs encourage them on the life-giving path of wisdom.



“Sally Michael seamlessly weaves New Testament and Old Testament stories together to teach biblical wisdom in a way that is clear, fun, and engaging for children. Her compelling word pictures and analogies make difficult concepts easier to grasp.”

—**Marty Machowski**, Pastor, Author of *Long Story Short* and *The Gospel Story Bible*

“This book is filled with essential biblical wisdom, conveyed in a manner that is wonderfully accessible to children. Additionally, it gives parents numerous practical ideas for applying God's wisdom to the heart and to every area of life.”

—**Jill Nelson**, Curriculum Author, *Children Desiring God*

“Once again, Sally Michael has used her fervent love for Christ and her keen understanding of the Scriptures to help parents and children. . . . I'm very excited to put this book into the hands of parents.”

—**Deepak Reju**, Associate Pastor, Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, D.C.

SALLY MICHAEL is the co-founder and publishing consultant of Children Desiring God, and she developed their widely used Sunday school curriculum for young people. She is also an author and a speaker, and she served as Minister for Children at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, for sixteen years.

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