

## Wisdom – Hebrew “hochma”

PROVERBS 3:19, 20; EPHESIANS 1:8; 18

The Hebrew word translated “wisdom” in the Bible is a bit more colorful than our English word. The Hebrew word translated “wisdom” is *hochma*, and it usually refers to some kind of skill or ability. So the Hebrew word distinguishes wisdom from knowledge because a person can have a mind full of facts, yet lack authentic wisdom. Often the authors of the Bible use this word *hochma* to describe people who are skilled in a trade or a craft, like wood working, metal working, embroidery, or weaving (New International Dictionary of Old Testament Exegesis and Theology, Vol. 2, p.133). This same word is used for people who are particularly skillful in tasks like trading, leadership, and even sailing.

Now with that background to the word *hochma*, look at [PROVERBS 3:19, 20](#). These two verses represent many verses in Proverbs that describe the relationship between wisdom and God’s creation. When using construction terminology, the author of Proverbs pictures God as being like an architect and wisdom as being like the builder. As the architect, God designs the blueprint for the universe, but then it is wisdom who actually builds off that blue print. Now this doesn’t mean that wisdom is a literal person. The book of Proverbs often personifies wisdom as a woman. In fact, all of [Proverbs chapter 8](#) is a poem about “lady wisdom.” We do the same thing when we personify luck as “lady luck.” So speaking of wisdom as a person is a literary device to call our attention to wisdom. You see God is a wise God, and so much so, that you can almost talk about God’s wisdom as if it were a person in its own right. And since the Hebrew word for wisdom (*hochma*) is a feminine noun, Proverbs personifies wisdom as a woman. Lady wisdom is the one who puts God’s creative blueprint for the world together.

## Wisdom – Hebrew “*hochma*” (Continued)

Because of this, wisdom isn't just an attribute of God, but it's also an attribute of God's creation. Because God laid the earth's foundation using wisdom, the world around us bears wisdom's imprint. So by looking at creation, we can see and understand God's wisdom.

Perhaps this analogy will help you understand the facts being presented. I'm told that at Disneyland almost all the rides and attractions have a hidden set of Mickey Mouse ears somewhere in the attraction. This was the attraction designers' way of putting Walt Disney's thumbprint on every attraction. Yet if you don't know about the hidden Mickey ears ahead of time, you don't see them. But once you know about them, you start looking, and then you start seeing the hidden Mickey ears everywhere. In a similar way, when God used His wisdom to create the world around us, wisdom put her mark on the world. Like hidden Mickey Mouse ears on every Disneyland attraction, all of God's creation has within it the fingerprint of God's wisdom. Once you know that, you can start to see that wisdom simply by looking at the world around you.

Another way to think of it is to picture God's creation as being like a piece of wood. God's wisdom is the wood grain in that piece of wood. Wisdom is the structure and order of God's creation. When a woodworker works with a piece of wood, he uses the wood and the grain of the wood to the best use of that grain. Wise living is living with the grain of wisdom in the world.

Now let us see a definition of biblical wisdom. Wisdom in the Bible is the art of skillful living by understanding and living within the order of creation. Wisdom is the understanding of the grain and making the best use of it. Wise living is discerning the structure and order that God built into the world, and then living our lives in harmony with that order and structure. At this point we must think of wisdom as life skills that come from understanding how God created the world around us.