

I remember a study that Norman Smith gave us while he was pastor here. Yes it was a long time ago. It was on **Knowledge, Understanding and Wisdom**, from the book of Proverbs. I remember that I struggled with it for weeks thinking that all of the words meant basically the same thing. I remember going to the dictionary and finding that it always used the other words to define the one I was looking up. I worked a long time (before just putting it aside) not knowing how each related to the other.

I think that many people use these words interchangeably, and so it is not surprising that many think they are all synonyms. I now believe that each is a building block to the other and with a better understanding of each word we can comprehend more of God's plan for our spiritual growth.

As I mature in my comprehension of God's Word, I keep finding that He uses words very carefully and that if I am not just as careful I miss many little nuances of what He is telling us in His Word. The mix up of these three words in my head has been a great example. I would like to give you my current understanding of these three words, with the caveat that I don't feel that I have necessarily pulled all of it together even yet. I hope that this article will get you to dig into this subject and find more about God's Plan for you on this subject.

Knowledge is what occurs in the head. We get certain bits of information and store them for one reason or another. It may be for us to use in a particular situation or maybe for something as mundane as trivia. Knowledge by itself is not of much use. For example, we can fill our heads with a lot of knowledge from books and literature, but it is of no use until it comes out and is used for a purpose.

Understanding is how we sort out this knowledge (information) we have collected. With understanding we begin to comprehend the significance of these new facts in relationship to other pieces of information that we have collected in the past. The information is no longer just a separate fact but is now has relativity to other concepts.

With understanding we begin to form opinions and judgments about things (not necessarily correct opinions, though). We begin to discern one thing from another, to perceive and comprehend the nature and significance of these facts in relation to other facts. Some refer to this as intelligence.

Wisdom is top of the peak of knowledge and understanding. It is the realization and proper utilization of the information in context with what is true, right, and lasting. Wisdom forms a prudent outlook and a course of action. Wisdom often goes under the names of common sense and good judgment. But true wisdom only comes from God, because only He has all of the facts and only He understands them in full context.

Wisdom, when it comes to us under the direction of the Holy Spirit, causes us to form correct opinions and judgments. This is something that could not happen with just knowledge and understanding. We can collect information, and to some extent put that information together to form opinions. But true wisdom only comes with the help of the Holy Spirit. Wisdom needs the input of the Holy Spirit to put the correct opinions in place and form correct plans of action. This is where mankind is at a disadvantage until the Holy Spirit has spiritually guided him.

The [reverent] fear of the Lord [that is, worshiping Him and regarding Him as truly awesome] is the beginning and the preeminent part of knowledge [its starting point and its essence]; But arrogant [a]fools despise [skillful and godly] wisdom and instruction and self-discipline. (Proverbs 1:7 Amplified Bible)

In the footnotes of one of my bibles, it states that the original Hebrew word for fool in this verse, indicates a person lacking in moral judgment. I think that clearly shows that wisdom is not just a human endeavor - it requires a spiritual element.

Proverbs discusses various kinds of fools including those who are closed-minded, over-confident, and reject instruction and correction—the unteachable; those who lack spiritual insight, the spiritually blind; and those who are flippant, hardened, and who deliberately choose to reject God and wisdom, in short the arrogant.

If we fear (reverence) God, then the knowledge, understanding and wisdom will be in correct alignment with Him and we will not need to wonder if we are doing the right thing. Our thinking will be guided, guarded and directed by the Holy Spirit and we can't have any better teacher or any better instruction. We can be confident in the way in which we live our lives.