***Understanding and Discernment  
  
Colossians 1:3-8  
  
COL-073***

Our subject is "Prayer for the Colossians." This is segment number seven in Colossians 1:9-14.

**We are Prone to be Dysfunctional**

Following the service this morning, a man rushed up and said, "Boy, what a tremendous exposition of truth that was this morning." For him, it rang a bell. And I said, "Yes, and I can guarantee you that somebody (some people) possibly, almost certainly, resented it." People do not like to be told that they're dysfunctional. People do not like to have their arrogance punctured. People do not like to think that they're not smart enough to be able to make the decisions as to what to do with their lives. But all we have to do is give enough rope, and wait long enough, and we find that negative volition will always hang the individual. We are prone to be dysfunctional. We are prone to be out of step with what God intended us to be. And it is only the most unmitigated foolishness and arrogance to not accept the fact that God's way is the best way. It's the only way.

It was the interjection of the sin nature into humanity by Adam's sin that has produced these centuries of dysfunctional people – people who just don't operate properly in life in a variety of ways. Man is a marvelous creation in the image of God: in spirit; soul; and, body – a triune being, which is a unified person, just as God is a triune being and one person. The image and the likeness of God is stamped in this way upon man. The material and the immaterial parts of man's being are a marvelous union reflecting his likeness to God in contrast to the animal world. But sin has spoiled the balance and the design of man, so that we are no longer able to function as God intended us. Man, by nature, is dysfunctional. Man, by nature, will do the wrong thing. Man, by nature, will come to the wrong conclusions.

Therefore, he needs information from outside of himself. And he needs the judgment and wisdom of experience that come beyond his own years, and his own experience, to give him direction so that he is functioning at his best. Sin has spoiled the balance, but God calls upon us to restore that balance. The Bible calls upon believers, therefore, to be imitators of Jesus Christ in their daily lives. We find such expressions in the Bible, as the apostle says: "Be imitators of me as I imitate Jesus Christ," or: "Put on Christ as one would put on a garment." All of these are expressions to guide us in the patterns for living – patterns for being a perfectly functional human being as Jesus was.

Colossians 1:9-10, that we will get into in greater detail, is simply an explanation of how to be like Jesus Christ as a competent person, functioning effectively in the devil's world – a world full of misfits.

So, the truth of the matter is clear from the time of Cain on down – that people are out of sync with God's intended purpose and plan and design for them. And an individual can get his nose out of joint over that, and can resent the fact that when we talk about a subject like this, sooner or later, we're going to hit somebody's button – somebody's real hot button such that they're going to come all aglow. And you can almost see it in their faces, because there they are – at a dysfunctional point in life. Now, you'll handle that in two ways. You'll see to that you don't show up at the next service because you don't want any more hot buttons to irritate you. Or you will say, "Why do I want to be a fool? That's true. I'm out of whack. I'm out of sync. And that has no future. That has no good purpose. That is only self-destruction, so I'll make the correction."

Fortunately, that correction is not so hard to make as far as knowing what to do, because we have Isaiah 11:2, which God the Holy Spirit put into the Scripture in order to alert us to the features that are essential for being a normal functioning person. This, of course, describes the coming Messiah savior, the God-Man, Jesus Christ. He was God, and there was no problem on how He was going to operate in that respect. But here He comes as a human being, free of a sin nature, back in the condition of Adam, but He still had to live in the devil's world, and He still had to cope with everything that was going to be thrown against Him, and the appeals to sinning, and the appeals to doing things in an abnormal way.

This passage describes the qualities of Christ in His humanity. No one ever lived who was able to cope with life as effectively as the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One whom the Father described as being well pleasing to Him. No greater honor can come to any of us than to be told that we are well-pleasing to our heavenly Father, because what that is telling us is that we're on track with reality. That means that we are functioning at our maximum best for our blessing in time and in eternity.

It was the Lord Jesus Christ Who, because he was a perfectly functioning human being, Who was able to take the abuse and the rejection that took Him all the way to the death upon the cross, but also to the victory of His resurrection.

Now, what was true in the experience of Jesus is also possible for the church-age believer today. And that's our great joy in this study. That's our great point of victory. And as we get into the greater details of Colossians 1:9-10, this will become clear. At this point, we're trying to get a picture of what the Word of God says that this is the way a normal human being was designed to work. Some who hear this instruction, of course, are going to resent it, but you are always free to follow your own insight, and to follow your heart's desires to your heart's content. Follow your star wherever it leads. Eventually, we will find out who is right; and, who is wrong – what is functional; and, what is dysfunctional.

What was true in the experience of Jesus is also possible, however, for the church-age believer today. It was the Lord Jesus Christ who was indwelt by the Holy Spirit, Who guided Him and empowered Him in His service to the Father. This is the essential basis for functioning in Satan's society. You have to, first of all, have the Spirit of God resting upon you. That cannot be unless you are a born-again believer, because at that point, the Spirit of God does come down to rest upon you by actually indwelling your body as his temple.

Christians today have the same distinction of being indwelt by the Holy Spirit as did the Lord Jesus. Therefore, Christians have the basis for normalcy. Unbelievers are thus always dysfunctional, in terms of what they should be before God, and in the values of their lives, because they are spiritually disoriented. They have no Holy Spirit resting upon them. There is, therefore, no excuse for a Christian to be a dysfunctional person with the assets of the Holy Spirit and Bible doctrine. You can live the way Christ lived.

The old sin nature in believers prefers, however, the course of imitating the dysfunctional world of Satan. This is always a hard thing to believe. Why anybody would want to imitate the world system and the people of this world is beyond me. But there is a compulsion within the heart and nature of a believer even that pushes him to gravitate toward being like the world system. And they will do the things that ensure that they will do that. They will see to it that they are not under the instruction of the Word of God. They will see to it that they will trivialize their Sundays by trash and shallowness, and that will ensure that they will be dysfunctional people. They will never be alerted to the issues of normalcy in the Christian life, and their potential as a royal person in God's family.

The old sin nature prefers imitating the losers of this world – the sorry sight of a Christian who is out of order and out of service. And I guarantee you that if there's anything in the nature of man that he flees from, he flees from the normalcy that is described in Scripture, particularly in this passage here in Isaiah.

Isaiah 11:2, we pointed out, gives three pairs of virtues which characterize the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what made Him an effective human being in daily life, and a resounding success in eternity. The first pair of virtues, we pointed out, deal with the intellectual function of a Christian.

**The Spirit of Wisdom**

The first virtue was "the Spirit of Wisdom." This is a God-given ability to apply the Bible doctrine we know to life situations. This is not an easy thing to do. This takes some experiences, and it takes some developing. It is amazing how people can know a doctrinal principle, and then live in complete violation of it. They know a doctrinal principle, and they live in complete contrast to it. And you say, "Wait a minute. What's wrong up in the upper story? You have part of the lights out. You're got one ore in the water. What is the problem that is not obvious to you, that you're out of functioning with the reality of life and of the Word of God?" The first necessity, intellectually, of being a functioning human being is to have the wisdom of God, which is the ability to apply doctrine. Now it's true, you have to know the doctrine to begin with, but that's what you're supposed to be getting all the time, and then you're supposed to be able to apply it.

This is one reason Christians flee from instruction and the Word of God. It is not uncommon for people to say, "If I listen to this, I just get to feeling guilty. When I hear that, I look at the person and say, "What on earth is going on in your mind? If God is bringing you under conviction, why would you not want to change? Why would you want to flee from the alerting of the fact that you're frittering away your life?" The Spirit of Wisdom is the ability to apply doctrine in life situations. Christians often highly resent the making of connections between what they're doing and what the Word of God requires us to do, because the sin nature prefers dysfunction rather than wisdom.

Man's IQ wisdom is a bummer. It is not compatible with wisdom, the instruction in Scripture. And yet, many Christians think that they're smart enough to think their way through – that they have very good reasons for doing what they do, even though it comes up and butts up against a scriptural principle. The usual excuse is that they have an exceptional situation. Well, eternity is going to very clearly show that human wisdom was out of sync with reality; with personal freedom; with real satisfaction; with blessing; and, with eternal prosperity. Applying doctrine by means of the wisdom of the Holy Spirit is essential to normalcy in daily living, and in coping with the issues of life. You cannot blow this off. You cannot dismiss this. Without God's wisdom, you're in bad trouble. You have to have that insight that only He can give you.

**Understanding**

The second part of this set of virtues, along with wisdom, was understanding, in Isaiah 11:2. This is the second part of the intellectual virtues for a functioning person. Understanding refers to the mental capacity of discerning, discriminating, and perceiving the real meaning of things. This is the ability of being able to see through people and situations.

This is exemplified by the Lord Himself in John 2:23-25: "Now when He (Jesus) was in Jerusalem at the Passover during the feast, many believed in His name, beholding His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on his part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men. And because He did not need anyone to bear witness concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man."

**Discernment**

Now here's a splendid example of discernment – of understanding. This is what the Word is talking about. Here are all these enthusiastic people following Jesus for His miracles, and for the one reason or another. But the Lord has understanding given to Him by the Holy Spirit, so therefore, He knows how fickle this crowd is. He knows how undependable they are. He knows that, in time, they're going to shout to have Him crucified – seeing through people and situations in life. When was the last time someone made a fool of you? When they did it, it was because you lacked discernment – plain; pure; and, simple. Somewhere there was not a connection between you and God.

Now, this is very subtle. I don't know how to describe it. Sometimes they use the word "insight;" sometimes "discernment;" and, sometimes instinct. But as you develop in your spiritual life, you'll eventually come to the point where you'll take a move, and God will ram a thought right into your head. It'll be a thought of discernment; of caution; of warning; or, of insight. And how many times I have regretted the simple fact of saying, "Oh, I'll think about that later. I'll pass it off." In a moment when an action should have been taken, that would've preserved a problem later on. I can give you a long list of those. And I've tried to learn that when the discernment comes very subtly, impacting upon the mind, I receive it as an expression from God. We don't hear voices, but we hear the will of God in our minds very definitely. We hear the guidance of God in our minds, and we hear that discernment that keeps us from being the victims of other people's foolishness. This is the ability from God of knowing the significance of what one is doing; what you are seeing; and, what you're hearing.

Another example from the Lord, of what we're talking about, the demonstration that He had understanding, is in John 6:30-33: "They said, therefore to him (those who were resisting Him and questioning Him), 'What then do you do for a sign that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written: 'He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.'' Jesus therefore said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father Who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world.'"

Now, here He is using the analogy of the manna that saved their lives in the wilderness, of the Exodus generation, to Himself, as the living Word of God, Who has come down as the manna which will give eternal life to those who, symbolically, eat Him, by trusting in Him as personal savior. Now, He's talking in language that's going to require some discernment. It is going to require some understanding. And a person who has that from God is going to make the connection. These, who are resisters (negative types) are never going to make the connection, as will be evident.

John 6:34-39: "They said therefore to Him, 'Lord evermore give us this bread.' Jesus said to them, 'Okay, I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me, I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven not to do My Own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me – that of all that He has given Me, I lose nothing. But raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father – that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him may have eternal life. And I myself will raise Him up in the last day.'" What a great promise! Here is understanding for those who are able to grasp it. Jesus said, "I am the bread that you're looking for. I am the bread that will give you eternal life. I am the One Whom the Father has sent so that you may trust in Me in terms of what I'm going to do in paying for your sins. And then someday I'll raise your body to eternal life."

Now, those who had understanding made the connection: trust Christ, and live forever with God. But not the Jews. John 6:40-42, "The Jews, therefore, were grumbling about Him because He said, 'I am the bread that came down out of heaven.' And they were saying, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? Now, how does he say, 'I have come down from heaven?''" Now, did they lack understanding, or what? They made no connection. They saw him as the human carpenter that they knew living down the street, and they made no connection with Him in terms of what he was teaching; the life He had demonstrated; and, certainly the power of miracles – all carefully described in the Old Testament that would identify the Messiah. And here these great Bible scholars lack the discernment to make the connection.

What they didn't have was understanding. John 6:43-52, "Jesus answered and said to them, 'Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws Him, and I will raise Him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets: 'And they shall all be taught of God. Everyone who has heard, and learned from the Father comes to Me. Not that any man has seen the Father except the One Who is from God. He has seen the Father. Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your Father's ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it, and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever. And the bread also, which I give for the life of the world is My flesh.' The Jews therefore begin to argue with one another, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'" They got further and further away from discernment. They were now totally wacko. They had no connection. They made no associations. They just didn't get it.

John 6:53-55, "Jesus therefore said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I'll raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink.'" And He has just explained to them how they would do that by believing in Him: "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the Living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven, not as your fathers ate and died." This is not a material bread that you eat. It is not the actual flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. It is not some pretense, as the Roman Catholics say that that's what they're doing. He says, "This is the bread that came down from heaven." He's speaking in symbolic language: "And died." John 6:58: "He who eats this bread shall live forever." And you eat it by trusting in Christ for what that death meant for them: "These things He said in the synagogue as he taught in Capernaum.

Now drop down to John 6:66, "As a result of this, many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore." Because Jesus had understanding, He didn't entrust Himself to people. And you should be very careful that the Christian who is your bosom buddy today is going to be your backstabber tomorrow, because unless that person stays on track with God, they're going to become abnormal. They're going to have their nose out of joint. They will soon be your mortal enemies, even though you're right, and they're wrong. These people became mortal enemies of Jesus Christ. They eventually took his life. He was 100% right, and they were 100% wrong. But because they lacked His understanding, they didn't know it.

"Jesus said, therefore, to the 12" 'You do not want to go away, do you?' (What a pointed question!) Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God.'" Now Peter had understanding. Do you see the contrast? The great intellectuals that Jesus spoke to of the religious community were a bunch of dysfunctional yo-yos. But here was a simple fisherman, Peter, who was totally functional because he possessed the discerning ability that comes from the Holy Spirit.

The quality of understanding refers to the comprehension of meanings, as distinguished from the apprehension of the bear facts (the data). You may understand some bit of information, but what does it mean? That's what understanding brings.

This is illustrated in the book of Daniel 12:9-10: "He said, 'Go your way, Daniel. For these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time. Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand. But those who have insight will understand.'" He's talking about the last days. He's talking about where we are today. He's talking about world movements. And the full impact of what is taking place was not revealed in Daniel's day. But it is revealed in our day. We know where world governments are moving. We know where society is moving. We know what people are determined to do in pushing out Christian heritage from their experience, and abandoning the Word of God. And he says that all of this which has been revealed to Daniel about future world empires and of the disaster that awaits mankind – "Many are going to be purged, and many purified, and many refined, who are believers who have understanding, but the wicked, they're going to go wildly on in their wickedness. None of them will understand." It is a terrible thing to be incapable of understanding and discerning the issues of life – seeing behind the facts as Daniel did. Understanding is comprehending what God thinks on a matter. It's a discernment of reality. And this understanding is, as always, a gift from God.

1 Kings 3 gives us an example of the fact that understanding is not something we come up with on our own capabilities: "In Gibeon, the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. And God said, 'Ask what you wish Me to give you.' And Solomon said, 'You have shown great lovingkindness to Your servant David, my father, according as he walked before You in truth and righteousness and uprightness of heart toward You. You have reserved for him this great lovingkindness, that You have given him a son to sit on his throne as it is this day.'" David is dead. Solomon is elevated to the throne.

"'What do you want, Solomon? I'll give you whatever you ask for.' 'And now, O Lord my God,' Solomon says, 'You have made Your servant king in place of my father, David. And I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. And Your servant is in the midst of Your people, which You have chosen – a great people who cannot be numbered or counted for multitude. So, give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, and to discern between good and evil, for who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" Verse 9 puts it all together: "Give me an understanding heart." What does that mean? So that I'm able to discern between good and evil. I can discern what is right, I can discern what is wrong. I can look behind the data. I can look behind the apparent facts. And I can see what is real. And I will be no man's fool. Nobody will be able to deceive me with a con job of some kind. I'll see through them.

"And it was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon asked this thing. For God said to him, 'Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies. But you have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice.'" There you have the words together again: discernment; and, understanding. "Behold, I've done according to your words. Behold, I've given you a wise and discerning heart, so there has been no one like you, before you, nor shall one like you arise after you. And I have given you also what you have not asked: riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you in all your days. And if you walk in my ways, keeping my statues and commandments, living faithfully by doctrine, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days."

Unfortunately, there came a time in Solomon's life when he lost his discernment and his understanding because he quit walking by the principles of the Word of God. He wrote a book called Ecclesiastes in which he expressed his frustration over the foolishness and emptiness and worthlessness of his life. But then when he got down to the end of life, he got all back on track again, and he realized how many days he had wasted, and how much discernment and understanding he had lost.

We are talking about comprehending what God thinks. This kind of comprehension comes directly from God. You must understand that it is not something that is dependent upon your cleverness or your consultation with other people. Psalm 119:104 puts it this way, "From Your precepts (doctrine), I get understanding. Therefore I hate every false way."

Understanding comes from Scripture. Understanding comes from the instruction of the Word. Therefore, people should diligently seek from God the discernment of understanding. Proverbs 4:5: "Acquire wisdom. Acquire understanding. Do not forget nor turn away from the words of My Mouth." Proverbs 4:7: "The beginning of wisdom is acquire wisdom. And with all your acquiring, get understanding."

So, they're the first two features that characterize the functional life of Jesus Christ. He Who was empowered by the Holy Spirit was given wisdom. He was shown how to apply doctrine in His humanity. Then He was given, with that wisdom, understanding. He had discernment. He could see through people. He could see through situations. He could lay out where a course of action is going to end up. This is what your children need to hear. They must have understanding, and they must have discernment. They must have the knowledge of the Word. They must have wisdom from God on how to use the word, because they're fighting their sin natures all the way. Then they must have understanding to be able to discern how to act in a certain situation. If not, they're going to turn out fools. You can count on it.

The Bible warns us, therefore, about depending upon our own understanding. How many of us have indeed memorized, from time and memorial, Proverbs 3:5? "Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Do not lean on your own understanding." Do you have understanding? "Oh, yeah." Do you have discernment? "Yeah," you think so. Yes, you do interpret. You look at a person, and you make an evaluation. You look at a situation, and you make an evaluation. You look at a proposition, and you make an evaluation. You look at an issue of life (a goal, or an ambition you have), and you make an evaluation. But without understanding from God, you come up with the wrong answer. You come up with the wrong technique. You come up with the wrong procedure.

Now, this is not esoteric. This is not something way out there off the wall. This is a functioning, normal Christian life. And when you get it straight in your mind, and you start working the system that God has provided, that worked for Christ in His humanity, you'll be amazed how life will fall together. You'll be amazed on what a superior human being you will become – all because of understanding.

In spiritual principles, understanding is a divine gift. Here again, Psalm 119 reminds us that, in understanding spiritual things, discernment is a gift from God. I need not tell you that the religious world is full of con men and false teachers. How do you discern the reality? Psalm 119:34, "Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law, and keep it with all my heart." There the "law" is referring to the principle of the Word of God in doctrinal terms.

Psalm 119:73: "Your hands made me and fashioned me. Give me understanding that I may learn Your commandments." When my mother conceived me, it was an act of your hands. When my mother developed my body, it was an act of Your hands. You fashioned me. You established me. You put me together. So, since you began me, God, and I start life with a disadvantage of a sin nature, please give me understanding (discernments) so that then I can really operate on Your Commandments.

In the New Testament, the same concept is in 2 Timothy 2:7, "Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything." What a promise! The Lord will give you understanding in everything? The Lord will give you discernment.

Many people secure information from the Bible but they don't understand the implications of applying it to life. This is where people get mad at the teacher of the Word of God, because he makes an application that they don't grasp. When Jesus taught the Word of God, He was always up against the people who knew the facts of Scripture, but they didn't have the understanding of the connections. Luke 24:45 says, "Then He (Jesus) opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures because these people, even after His resurrection, did not discern what was going on. Understanding the issues of life is the product, ultimately, of the fact that you do believe the Word of God as the Word of God.

In Hebrews 11:3, we read, "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the Word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible." Here's a passage that tells us that God is the Creator. Here's a passage that tells us that we understand something: how? By faith. We believe the Word of God – that God made literally the ages of man. They were prepared by a spoken Word of God so that everything we see in creation was not made out of things which are visible.

**Evolution**

All right, along comes the evolutionary scientist: "Please tell us, Dr. Sagan, before you die. It won't be too much longer before you cross over to the other side. You say you cannot conceive of somebody being responsible for covering your fractures with some deity out there. You cannot conceive of someone like Jesus Christ dying for your sins. Dr. Sagan, tell us where did everything in the universe and life come from?" He would say, "Well, from preexisting material. Anybody knows that." You would say, "Dr. Sagan, it came from preexisting material?" He would say, "Yes." But you would say, Dr. Sagan, the Bible says that the world was not made out of things which are visible. The Bible says that what is visible was made by the spoken Word of God." Do you see the difference between understanding (discerning) reality, and being completely buffaloed by the confusion and the distortion of the human mind?

The evolutionary scientists are all fouled up on the origin of life and the origin of the universe. Why? Because they have no understanding which can only come from God through Scripture so that they grasp the truth of what empirical science is teaching them. What they find in their experience about them should tell them that somebody had to make all this. And what they should know, as the earlier generation of Christian scientists did, because they accepted the biblical basis of God's provision of these things – that because God created them, and He created them under natural laws, because natural laws function in a systematic way. That's why science is possible. We can know that certain things will happen when we do certain things in the world of physics and the world of chemistry. Science is governed by the laws of God because God made them. And when people understood this, then they said, "Aha, that's what God made when he told Adam, 'Figure it all out. Here, I made it for you. You're going to be very fascinated by what I have put together, and what the human mind, when it finds out how to do things, can do.

I was sitting the other day at my desk, and I had to call somebody in the other part of the country, and I walked over a few feet to a little stand; picked up a little portable telephone; pulled out the aerial; punched the button; hit a few buttons; and, the person says, "Hi, buddy," or something like that at the other end. And I was just overwhelmed to say, "I'm sitting in this dining room, talking to somebody hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of miles away. That's black magic! No. It is a Creator God who created laws of science by which the natural laws of this world operate. And when we figured them out, that's how we can sit and do that with a portable phone. And what a convenience. What an amazing thing. What is that? It's understanding.

God gives understanding in the material world, and in the scientific world. And the person who looks to God is the person who's going to figure it out. Do you have something that you need fixed? Look to God for understanding, and He'll give you a solution for solving it, even if it's a material thing. The evolutionary scientist, lacking understanding of creation, is completely lost in reality. He lacks understanding so that he uses his high IQ to believe the unscientific myths of evolution. And you say, "How dumb can you be?" Well, it is dumb. And the reason you are smart is because you have been given understanding. The reason you've been given understanding is because you have learned the principles of the Word of God, and you've been positive to what the Bible has to say. Therefore, you have the wisdom of God in applying Scripture to the situation of the origin of the universe and of life.

So, a Christian with God's understanding about creation readily sees the foolishness of the evolutionary concept.

The Bible also points out that one of the things that comes with understanding is godliness in living. People who practice evil lack understanding. That's a very simple principle. And yet our society is filled with people who are hell-bent to practice evil. Young people growing up – they want to fight you all the way when you put out a hand to restrain from evil. They want to do what is wrong. Of course, most parents help them along. Most parents walk right along with their stupidity; with all their shortcomings; and, with all their short insights, and they help them right along. They put them right in position. They maneuver them so that the kid is in maximum danger. And some of them are lucky to survive. Others get cut down.

Job 28:28, "And to man, he said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord – that is wisdom. And to depart from evil is understanding." Now how many people believe that today? From the government on down, we have people who say, "The thing to do is what is wrong? Evil is what you should pursue." But the Bible says to pursue evil is to show that you don't have discernment from God. You lack the insight.

This is what made Jesus Christ great in His humanity. He knew that evil was a bad scene. He had understanding from God. Therefore, He discerned that if I do this thing which is contrary to the moral laws of God, I'm going to be beaten bloody by the devil. I am going to suffer. I'm going to pay a great price, and it will not be worth it.

So, don't get your nose out of joint when we tell you that you must have a knowledge of doctrine, after you have the Holy Spirit indwelling you to be your teacher – that you must have wisdom to know how to apply that doctrine because you're not all that smart. And you must have understanding of the consequences of not following that wisdom, and applying the word of truth to a certain principle of life. That's the way it works. And you're not going to beat the game. I'm not going to beat the game. Nobody is. God's way is His way, because that's the only way human beings can function in a world that is dominated by Satan and his principles.

People with understanding are not dysfunctional because they reject human viewpoint folly. When you reject human viewpoint folly, you enable yourself to function properly. To reject evil is not to do yourself some injury, and yet that's exactly the impression people have. They deny themselves freedom. They restrict themselves in some way. Proverbs 9:6: "Forsake your folly and live, and proceed in a way of understanding." Got it? What is understanding? Forsake your folly. Forsake your folly and live. What does the world's understanding say? "Oh, I want to live, therefore I want to be a pig. I want to be a dog. I want to be related to the other sex like dogs sniffing each other. I want to have folly so that I can really live." Now, that's the world. And that's its understanding. And you're going to have to say, "You guys are stupid. You're wrong. And I'll have nothing to do with you." Okay? We're not going to have anything to do with you. That's fine with me. I don't like running around with pigs anyhow. They smell bad. And the younger you are, the more courage it's going to take to say, "Not for me. I'm a man. And I'm going to act like the man of God that He has made me to be, and that He has intended me to be, because that's to be a functional person. Forsake your folly, and you'll have real life. Proceed in the way of understanding.

If we do not discern the consequences of some current kick of evil, then people will be able to make fools of us. What little kick of evil has come into your life so that somebody could make a fool of you? It happens all the time. A life without understanding is a wasted life, filled with self-imposed miseries. Jesus, in His humanity, had understanding from God, so He knew the score, and so should we. This is what is available to us, and this is our heritage.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this instruction of Your word.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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