

# Trusting God's Guidance, part 3

*"Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is knowing the difference between right and almost right." Spurgeon*

## Proverbs 13:15; 14:6,8,15,33; 15:21; 16:16; 17:24; 19:8 Christian Standard Bible

13:15 Good sense wins favor,  
but the way of the treacherous never changes.<sup>[a]</sup>

14:6 A mocker seeks wisdom and doesn't find it,  
but knowledge comes easily to the perceptive...

8 The sensible person's wisdom is to consider his way,  
but the stupidity of fools deceives them...

15 The inexperienced one believes anything,  
but the sensible one watches<sup>[b]</sup> his steps...

33 Wisdom resides in the heart of the discerning;  
she is known<sup>[c]</sup> even among fools.

15:21 Foolishness brings joy to one without sense,  
but a person with understanding walks a straight path.

16:16 Get wisdom—  
how much better it is than gold!  
And get understanding—  
it is preferable to silver.

17:24 Wisdom is the focus of the perceptive,  
but a fool's eyes roam to the ends of the earth.

19:8 The one who acquires good sense<sup>[d]</sup> loves himself;  
one who safeguards understanding finds success.

**Deeper Discoveries**— In these verses (10:13; 14:6, 33; 17:24), the word discernment comes from the Hebrew "biyn", used nearly 250 times in the Old Testament. It is related to the Hebrew word for "between," and it reflects the ability to tell the difference between two opposites: good and evil, wisdom and foolishness. It is a crucial element in the Book of Proverbs, where so much of the material consists of such contrasts.

### Footnotes

a. 13:15 LXX, Syr, Tg read treacherous will perish

b. 14:15 Lit the prudent understands

c. 14:33 LXX reads unknown

d. 19:8 Lit acquires a heart

## A CLOSER LOOK: DISCERNMENT & UNDERSTANDING

The first verses selected for this section deal with discernment, the ability to distinguish between truth and error, wisdom and folly. First, Solomon contrasts the person who has discernment and the person who lacks it. He who has discernment will become wise, and the words that come from his lips will help others. But he who lacks judgment (literally, heart) has no capacity for learning wisdom. He will face punishment because he learns in no other way.

13:15. Good understanding is associated with favor (also in 3:4), sometimes translated "grace" or "graciousness." This may refer to God's grace or man's favor. An unfaithful person, in contrast, finds that life is hard. This word is used to describe something permanent like a rock (Num. 24:21). Perhaps it depicts a calloused heart so hardened that it cannot change.

14:6, 8, 15, 33. This verse pictures a mocker who is looking for wisdom? Even a fool sometimes wants wisdom to escape an unpleasant situation, but he looks in the wrong place. A discerning person, however, gains knowledge easily because he knows the source to consult. Discernment goes with prudence, the good sort of shrewdness that thinks things through before walking into trouble. Fools, on the other hand, are easily deceived; the simple, gullible person is easily influenced. Both will stumble into trouble. In v.33, wisdom is pictured here as a woman, just as in earlier chapters. Her normal residence is in the heart of a discerning person, even though she offers her counsel to the foolish who pass by.

15:21. When a person lacks judgment (literally, lacks heart), he derives pleasure from foolishness. Understanding, however, keeps a person on a straight course, one that has been cleared of obstructions.

16:16; 19:8. Once again the writer compares the relative values of wisdom and wealth. Understanding is more valuable than silver. The person who chooses wisdom is acting in his best interest, out of genuine concern for his destiny. And he who cherishes or guards and preserves understanding will reap ample benefits.

17:24. Literally, "wisdom is in front of a man of discernment." He sets his sights on wisdom and finds that it is clearly visible. A fool, on the other hand, is continually distracted by temptations so that he misses the truth at hand.

**God's wisdom gives us the ability to see danger ahead and sidestep it, helping us analyze each situation we enter.**

## "LET US PRAY..."

Lord, keep our eyes fixed on the path of wisdom. Help us today to be counted among the wise and not the foolish. We need your guidance. Thank you for all you do. AMEN

NEXT WEEK... *Trusting God's Guidance, part 4 — Knowledge*

*The above devotional has been summarized and adapted from the Holman Old Testament Commentary on Proverbs cited below.*  
[Max Anders (2012). HOTC Vol. 13: Proverbs. B&H Publishing Group.]