

Wisdom

Sunday 19th May, 2019

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness. James 3: 13-18

Wisdom that comes from heaven



Humility, purity, love of peace, consideration, submissiveness, mercy, impartiality, sincerity...

Wisdom that comes from heaven is sometimes foolishness in the world's eyes: pay more rather than less to workmen; don't glean too close to the edges; if someone asks you to carry their bag one mile, carry it two miles.

Earthly, unspiritual wisdom

Not all bad – worldly wisdom implies sound judgement as well as knowledge.

But sometimes we get a nudge to do something really crazy:

Earthly wisdom says we should maximise profit and keep overheads and wages as low as possible; that's a "no-brainer". Jesus said we must be "as shrewd as snakes."

When to do what? we need heavenly wisdom to decide

A worldly and heavenly CV

- Achievements
- Proficiencies
- Positions of responsibility
- Education
- Times we have *not* achieved to let someone else have the glory
- Times we've been suckered out of our shirts and said, "hey, take my jacket as well"
- Times we have settled for a less meteoric career path to do some not very glorious tasks.

When to invest in either CV? No blanket rule: we need heavenly wisdom

Is wisdom really such a big deal?

- The bible says wisdom is of inestimable value: “the price of wisdom is beyond rubies. ... it cannot be bought with pure gold.” [Job 28: 18b-19]
- If we have riches without understanding we are like the beasts that perish [Psalm 49:20]

An article on Silicon valley in the National Geographic, February 2019 cautions us that “smart wisdom” in itself is not enough:

- “Technology rules the future, but there’s also a grudging acknowledgement that sometimes in the pursuit of making things better and more efficient, you may be hurting people along the way.”
- A senior person in Google: “The tricky thing right now is for companies to figure out how they’re going to take responsibility and govern themselves in ways that are seen as aligned with not just the interest of their shareholders but also the interest of society broadly.”
- “Recently there’s been a sobering up of sorts. Responsibility and empathy are the new buzzwords.”

I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that with 30 years of good science we could address those problems. But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy... and to deal with those we need a spiritual and cultural transformation – and we scientists don't know how to do that.

Gus Speth (Dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, U.S. Advisor on climate change, and helped to found the Natural Resources Defence Council)

Three specific advantages of heavenly wisdom:

1. Heavenly wisdom includes knowledge of the future not just the present; and knowledge of motivations not just actions.
2. God's kingdom is built by people acting wisely.
3. We have a father God who loves us and provides for us; where he leads is a good path.

**Teach us to number our days aright, that we
may gain a heart of wisdom**

Psalm 90: 12

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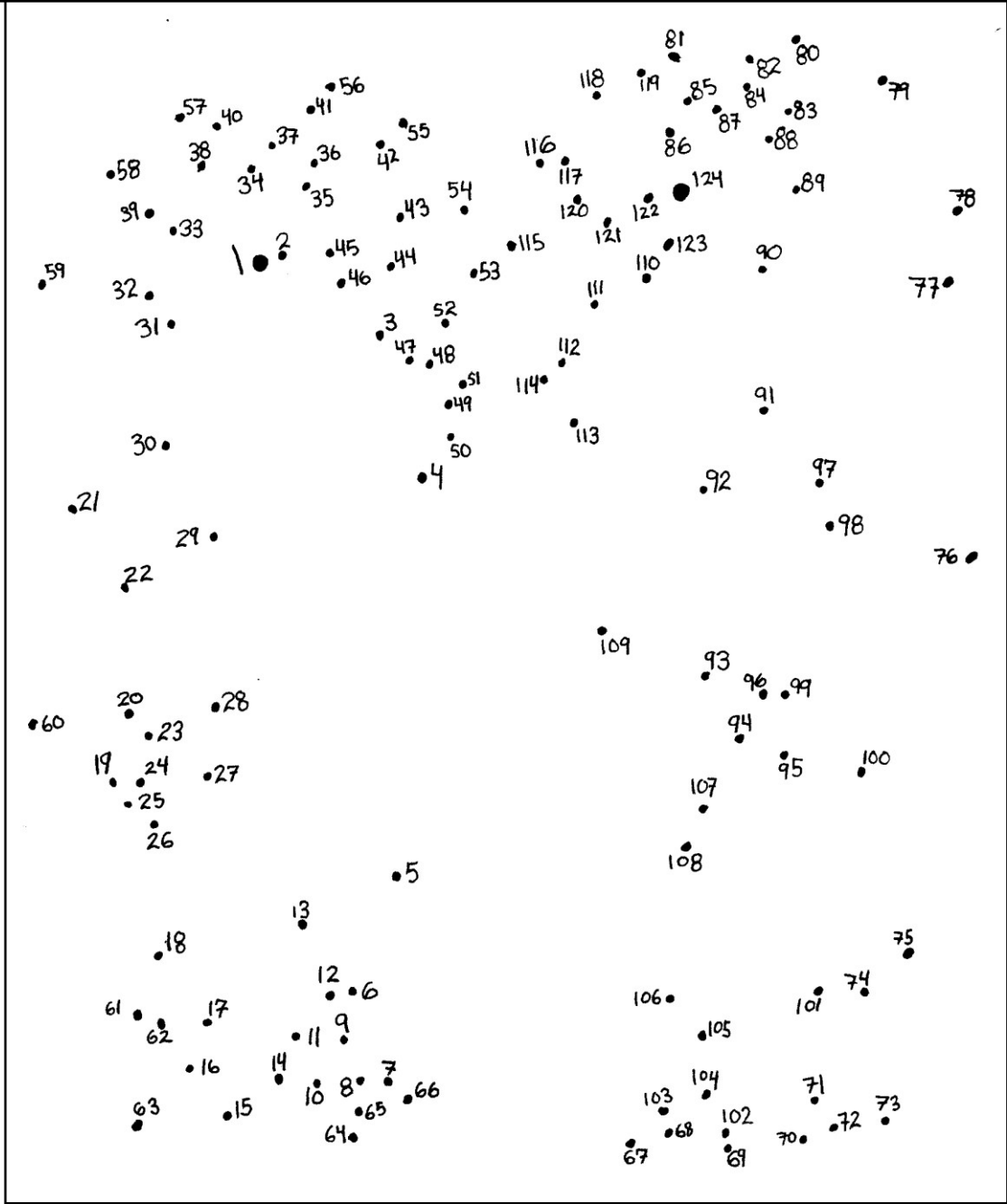
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Don't only number in chores: take time to savour
And don't forget to number in rest days

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Five conclusions

1. Wisdom is seeing things through God's eyes.
2. If we only make smart worldly decisions then selfish ambition is likely to create disorder.
3. We need to pray for wisdom for ourselves, our spouses, our children, our leaders.
4. We need to pray like David – “inquire of the Lord” (and listen for his wisdom).
5. And we need to pray for God's Holy Spirit in us.

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