

Wisdom: Salvation with Work Clothes

“In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” Col 2.3

1. *Wisdom begins with Jesus’ salvation*
2. *Wisdom has Transcendent Source*
3. *Wisdom embedded in creation*
4. *Wisdom imprinted on humans*

(1) Christ is the storehouse of knowledge (“hidden treasures”). Christ is the layaway for the world’s information and its application: it is laid up, treasured, stored away. Paul uses the Greek word that we still use today: *thesaurus*. A storehouse of words now, was a storehouse of valuables then. Jesus said a person focuses their attention on values they think are important, made obvious by life choices. Matt 6:21; 12:35, 52; Lk 12:24, 33-34

(2) Christ is the source of knowledge (“wisdom and knowledge”). In Greek thought knowledge came through the senses and wisdom was equivalent to philosophical speculation. Paul’s use of the terms is exactly opposite. Hebrews personalized the Heavenly origin of knowledge in wise living. The believer listens to the Personification of Wisdom in Proverbs 8:34 as she says “Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors.” Arthur Holmes “God’s goodness emanates like a light diffusing itself throughout the entire creation; he is the exemplar, the Logos of all created things, and he is the one to whom it leads and for whom it all exists.”

(3) Christ’s control of knowledge is universal (“all”). I often tell my students, “‘All’ means all and that’s all, ‘all’ means.” Abraham Kuyper “There is not one square inch of earth over which Christ does not declare ‘I am Lord!’” Erasmus: “All studies, philosophy, rhetoric are followed for this one object, that we may know Christ and honor him. This is the end of all learning and eloquence.” Human attempts either to fathom or discover more of Christ’s knowledge “are but the outer fringe of his works.”

(4) Christ’s knowledge is exclusive (“in whom”). “In” tells both the location and instrumentation of a subject. So, there are no brute facts. Neutrality is a myth. Equality of beliefs is impossible. A Christian view of study is broadminded in the sense that everything is open for investigation. A Christian, however, is close-minded (as is everyone to their own beliefs) in this: all knowledge is from and through Christ. John W. Peterson’s hymn “A Student’s Prayer” ties application to instruction:

May the things we learn, so meager, never lift our hearts in pride
Till in foolish self-reliance we would wander from Thy side.
Let them only bind us closer, Lord, to Thee, in whom we find
Very fountainhead of Wisdom, Light and life of all mankind.

Questions: Can we learn from unbelievers? Where do we go to find a Christian interpretation of wisdom? How do we respond when people say “knowledge is neutral”? Does it matter where wisdom originates? How do Christians communicate wisdom to a pagan culture?

Wisdom: Similarities and Differences

“And God said, ‘Let there be . . .’”

The Bible in the Ancient World

Compare & contrast, Similarities & differences

A “piece of truth” becomes “the whole truth” [diagram]

Did the Bible “borrow” from other sources?

The key to understanding asks “What is the source of knowledge?” [diagram]

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Wisdom based on Uncommon Truth, found in common truths. God alone gives

- ◆ the physicist properties to obey,
- ◆ the biologist observations to make,
- ◆ the chemist sequences to expect,
- ◆ the physician diagnoses to follow,
- ◆ the geologist patterns to pursue,
- ◆ the meteorologist models to predict,
- ◆ and the environmentalist laws to encourage.

It Works Because It’s True (not it’s true because it works)

Jazz Music Twelve tones from which we get notes, scales,

Science Discovery and Invention in God’s Creation. People all over the world and throughout time uncover truth collecting data, applying information, exploring, and observing. What is true in one place is true in another (Ps 64:9; 65:8; 66:5). Diligent probes can reveal new information. However we only uncover “the tip of the iceberg” of God’s works (Job 28:3, 11; 26:14).

Research God is the source and unity of His creation, therefore all truth is God’s Truth. Multiple perspectives of peer review is essential. Listening to people (all ethnicities, all experiences) is imperative. Humility is the essence of knowledge.

Common Grace Believers and unbelievers alike declared The Hebrew God created and unified all things; from Rahab to Hezekiah to Hiram, king of Tyre (Josh 2.11, 2 Kgs 19.15, 2 Chr 2.12).

Questions: What is the difference between creating and discovering truth? How is the Christian different in their pursuit of knowledge different than that of their unbelieving colleague? How are the concepts of excellence or proficiency impacted by a Christian view of wisdom? Does it matter who speaks, writes, discovers, or practices truth? Explain. How should Christians explain their views of wisdom with those who have different sources of wisdom?

Creational Order from Genesis

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1. Worth: the existence of time, space, and matter indicates value (1:1)
2. Skill: finesse and craftsmanship describe “God’s work” (2:2)
3. Beauty: “and He saw that it was beautiful” (1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25)
4. Form: “light...darkness...water...sky” (1:3-2:3) structure, mode, orderly arrangement of the parts of a whole
5. Function: each thing had a purpose (cf. 1:14 “let them be for...”)
6. Harmony: each thing interrelated properly with everything else (cf. 1:12)
7. Utility: “I give you every plant for food”—usefulness for living life (1:29)
8. Unique: “He separated” (1:4, 6, 7, 14, 18) assigning each part a place
9. Variety: “according to their kinds” (1:11-12, 21, 24-25)
10. Design: “it was so” (cf. 1:7) and “the universe was complete” (2:1)
11. Time: “evening and morning” (cf. 1:5)
12. Appreciation: “God saw what He had made” (cf. 1:4)
13. Space: “separating the waters above...below” (1:7) depth
14. Matter: “water...ground” (1:6, 9)
15. Energy: “God created” (1:1) supernatural power; “there was light” (1:3) natural resource for earthly capability

Wisdom: Proverbs as a Mirror

Aphorism: A proverb from Proverbs is a short statement that mirrors a profound principle. Placed together, these bits of wisdom were designed for productive living—with God and other humans

Supernatural – natural relations

Theological – me with God

Sociological – me with others

Psychological – me with myself

Creational – me with creation

Before God & Man

Joseph – Acts 7.9, 10

Samuel – 1 Samuel 2.26

Jesus – Luke 2.52

Paul – Acts 24.16

Church – 2 Corinthians 8.21

If Proverbs is a mirror . . .

**. . . We should not ignore what we see. Sometimes we act as if problems will go away
“All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit.”**

Proverbs 16.2

**. . . We should not see only what we want to see (hypocrisy) Proverbs shows on the
outside what we believe on the inside (26.23-26)**

. . . We should see things in ourselves which need to be changed (16.6)

. . . We should be open to examination, conviction (8.33)

Questions to Consider:

- 1. How do we plan ahead, prepare for the future?**
- 2. How do we communicate Truth in a fallen world?**
- 3. How do we interact with situations which are not “cut and dried”?**
- 4. How do we learn from negative situations?**
- 5. How do we respond when we see problems to be solved in ourselves versus
problems to be solved in others?**

PROVERBS: Salvation with Work Clothes

Proverbs was part of the curriculum for Israel's youth. They not only learned how to make a living but *how to live*. Children were taught at home (Deut 6:4-9), in the temple (Lev 10:10-11), and at the feet of wise men (see 1 Kings 4 and 10).

As the name of the book suggests (from the root “to represent”) a concept was made clear by reflecting it off a common or similar principle (the Akkadian definition was “mirror”). Practically speaking, a proverb is a short statement that declares a very profound, heavy principle, designed to give wisdom for living with God and people.

The theological foundation which establishes the purpose of the whole book is “the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 1:7).

(1) Fear: the subject of a submissive life. This way of living acknowledges God's complete control. There is a trust or confidence in God's actions. An exhibition of high ethical behavior toward Heaven and the practical affairs of earth are on display.

(2) Yahweh: the object of a well-lived life. The assumption is that God exists. Yahweh is a name that promises a covenantal relationship with the expectation of holiness in keeping with His character. “Character education” begins with the character to emulate.

(3) Beginning: the direction of a life well begun. This “beginning” is not a stage through which one passes. This is not a “launching pad.” The word denotes the foundation upon which all else is built and the continuation of building throughout one's life.

(4) Wisdom: the result of a well-ordered life. The assumption of wisdom is that life is given purpose. A godly lifestyle is the outcome of commitment to Divinely established ethical regulations creating a Heaven-sensitive impulse.

Proverbial education had a theological base. The study of life—history, humanities, science, the arts, logic—must yield to the Sovereign Provenance of an Almighty Creator. Every subject, every thought must be integrated with and permeated by the belief that God created, sustains, and controls. Only with this “worldview” will the universe become meaningful.

Theology produces an ethical framework. On the vertical level, man's right relationship with God must be established on God's terms. Faith, trust, acceptance, or belief restores fellowship intended in Genesis 1 and 2. On the horizontal level, proper relations with The Personal Creator allows proper conduct with all persons. Sociology, government, law, psychology, and a myriad of other subjects are directed affected. In short, wisdom in Proverbs is an intimate relationship with God that directly impacts humanity's ethical behavior with itself.

Wisdom: Wisdom and Order

*WISDOM = ORDER A place for everything and everything in its place. The worldview which has a coherent, cohesive has an overarching, creational, sustaining order.
“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov 1.7, 9.10)*

In the ancient world, “wisdom” was understood to be that “order.” Ancient or modern, people like it when everything “fits together.” Wisdom brings (1) cosmic order via creation, (2) societal order via law, (3) relational order via manners, and (4) political order via government. Wisdom = pursuit, preservation of order.

Why people want a “Yoda”

*Understanding God’s requirements, expectations preserves order
“Wisdom” transcends the basic knowledge or skill of any discipline.*

The wise person desires consistently dependability seeking a stable basis for living

■ **S.P.U.D. Test:** S = Sensible P = Practical U = Universal D = Dependable

The foolish person brings disorder by their behavior or thinking

■ **C.R.U.D. Test:** C = conceited R = rebellious U = undisciplined D = damaging

The one who does NOT fear the Lord tries to find coherence, order in something or someone else, usually themselves. The one who DOES fear the Lord rests in consistency found in The Personal Eternal Triune Creator

In the wisdom literature as a whole, the fear of God has a moral orientation and is manifested by the avoidance of and hatred of evil evidenced by an upright walk. The fear of God is the basis for living in Ecclesiastes (3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12-13; 12:14). “Fear” is actually a worship that takes place in the presence of The Holy One. Daily living, choices, and ethical questions are affected. Bowling states, “Fearing and proper living are so closely related as to be virtually synonymous ideas (Lev 19:14; 25:17; 2 Kgs 17:34; Deut 17:19).”¹

“The phrase ‘fear of the Lord’ encapsulates the totality of man’s religious faith. It is not merely the emotion of fear, nor do the terms *awe* and *reverence* exhaust its meaning. It is a comprehensive term for the worship of the Lord or religion, the sum total of man’s relationship with God.”²

“You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord” (Psalm 115:11) certainly maintains this nuance of right relationship. The phrase in question is also a characteristic of the Messiah (Isaiah 11:2, 3). Surely, Christ is not trembling before the Father; rather, the Son stands unified in purpose and stance. Job 28:28 practically defines the term, “The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.” Psalm 111:10 adds the element of intimidation clearly saying that one stands in the presence of a superior Person (cf. Ps 19:9).

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge/wisdom” (1:7; 9:10; cf. 1:29; 2:5; Ps 34:11-14). This is *not* the chief or sum; rather the start or inception of moral righteousness. The first step in correct living is our relationship with God remembering that demons tremble knowing Him (James 2:19)! As a result of man being in that right relationship, he can have a meaningful and enjoyable life—the whole point of Proverbs.

¹ Andrew Bowling. 1980. *yara* TWOT 1:400.

² C. Hassell Bullock. 1979. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books*. (Moody): 52.

The S.P.U.D. TEST A four-fold standard for wisely addressing ethical issues

ONE: Is the belief **sensible** to what is? Is it prudent and logical? Or is the worldview based on emotion, experience, or desire? Is the thinking true to life or do you respond, “Oh, come on!”?

TWO: Is the belief **practical** and workable in everyday life? Can people live this way? Or when applied to reality is the worldview useless and unbeneficial?

THREE: Is the belief **universal**—for all people in all places at all times? Does the worldview produce a help for people throughout history? Or are people hurt by the ethics of the viewpoint?

FOUR: Is the belief **dependable** and consistent? Are the ideas based on a changeless set of standards? Or are they based on the whim of human decision?

Sensibility maintains that standards are embedded in God’s world. Does it make sense to subscribe to celebrities’ beliefs because they are celebrities? Does “reality TV” do anything other than distract us from real life? Do talk show hosts carry any moral weight for human problems outside of their own voices? **Sensibility** teaches that “in the multitude of counselors there is safety”³ when these counselors speak true Truth.

Practicality mandates that life should be intertwined with God’s Truth. Kass gets close to work ethics when he says “In this age in which everything is held to be permissible so long as it is freely done. Repugnance may be the only voice left that speaks up to defend the central core of our humanity. Shallow are the souls that have forgotten how to shudder.”⁴ **Practicality** teaches Jesus’ comment “what comes out of a person makes him unclean”⁵ gets to the Center of Truth.

Universality moves all humans because we are all made in God’s image. Why are all cultures obsessed by other-world creatures invading our world? What do haunted houses suggest about peoples’ beliefs in spirits and ghosts? **Universality** teaches that “we wrestle against . . . the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places.”⁶ Truth in this world comes from Another World.

Dependability motivates people toward God’s changelessness. When we watch an athletic contest all we ask of referees is to treat both teams equally. When students turn in essays all they ask is that teachers be consistent in their grading. When the public listens to a news broadcast all they ask is that all points of view are heard. **Dependability** teaches that we need “God who does not lie,”⁷ an Immovable Standard Outside of ourselves.

Five Questions:

1. How should we rethink our explanation of “fear” to young people?
2. Does “the fear of the Lord” compel our thinking, confession, compulsion?
3. How do we explain words like “sensible” and “dependable” to our non-Christian friends?
4. When do we commit the reading of Proverbs to our daily schedule?
5. How has wisdom caused us to listen, respond, support, relinquish, examine, avoid, or resolve anything in our lives?

³ Proverbs 11:14; 24:6.

⁴ Leon Kass and James Q. Wilson. 1998. *The Ethics of Human Cloning*. (AEI Press): 19.

⁵ Mark 7:21-23.

⁶ Ephesians 6:12 (ESV).

⁷ Titus 1:2; see the whole of chapter one which shows the difference between trustworthiness and liars.

Wisdom: True Truth

Hebraic-Christian Distinctive Mindset: Thinking Like Hebrews, not Americans

Americanized Christianity “Secular” vs. Sacred; Hebraic-Christian mindset = warp and woof
= The Personal Eternal Triune Creator; = “By Jesus are all things held together” (Col 1.17)

1. Always remember the purpose of the book:

“**Proverbs**” = **reflection, Seeing one’s likeness in the mirror**

Responsibility to God and man

2. Always remember **the audience of the book**: “Hear my son your father’s instruction, forsake not your mother’s teaching” (1.8)

Proverbs was written for young, next gen leadership. “Sons” has broad meaning in Hebrew.

Biological but also sociological.

Contextual Guidance for life as children/disciples assume leadership.

3. Always remember **the natural order depends on** Supernatural Order: “Fear The Lord” (1.7, 9.10)

(A) Truth is exclusive, Not all cultural beliefs are true

(B) Truth transcends culture, BUT all cultures contain “true Truth”

What is the source of Truth & why does it matter?

Two Diagrams

Truth v Error

- Self versus **Ourselves** (Individualism)
- Power versus **Weakness** (Pluralism)
- Now versus **Then** (Presentism)
- “Works” versus “**Truth**” (Pragmatism)
- Numbers versus **Ideas** (Consumerism)

Cultural “Truth”

1. Truth is Relative: there is no objective standard for language, culture, history
2. Ethics are Preference: no judgment exists as lifestyle is a matter of choice
3. Lifeviews are Equal: no one group is superior to another
4. Society constructs Reality: no timeless truths exist for culture
5. Power is Control: no debate is allowed

Common Grace The goodness of all creation profits all people. The Scriptural emphasis is on God’s beneficence and kindness in weather, language, discovery, agriculture, etc. (Genesis 39:5; Psalm 107:8, 15, 21, 31, 43; 145:9, 15-16; Matthew 5:44-45; Luke 6:35-36; John 1:9; Acts 14:16-17; 1 Cor 7:12-14).

Questions

1. What is the difference between exclusive and cultural truth?
2. Why is the source of true Truth so important?
3. How can we discern Proverbial wisdom in everyday life?
4. What is my God-given gift in life & how can I mentor others with it?
5. How can I participate within common grace culture without submitting to the spirit of the age?
6. How can I participate with common grace culture without forgetting I am here to live Truth before others?

Wisdom: Fools

Wisdom: once found the prudent want more, adding to what they have (Prov 10.14)

Naïve versus Innocence

- Smugness
- Ethic-less
- Gullibility
- Open to anything
- Knows, but acts anyway

- Humility
- Virtuous
- Unimpeachable
- Blameless
- Knows, but does not act

Making “Simple,” Possible

- The Christian god is dead
- The Christian ethic is dead
- “The cut flower syndrome”
- Our culture is “simple” if it thinks life as we know it can last w/o an ethical base

Intention

- If the Bible is interpreted without authorial intent . . .
- Original purpose is lost
- Left up to the whim of the interpreter, to the winds of cultural opinion, to the wiles of the powerful

- “KNOWLEDGE” (NIV) “INSTRUCTION” (ESV)
- A relationship with God is essential to wisdom.
- In fact, the parallelism with “wisdom” is especially important. Knowledge is not just “what’s in our heads” but action based upon revelation.

- There is something special about the man who walks in knowledge; his relationship with the Lord sets him apart from others (1:4b). [This is a crucial term in Hebrew. Hosea (2:20; 4:1, 6; 6:3, 6), Jeremiah (10:14; 22:16), John (17:3; and many in 1 John), as well as the rest of the prophets and apostles, used this term to parallel “the fear of the Lord” (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10). Nowhere else in Hebrew vocabulary does a word wed the ideas of knowing and doing.]

QUESTIONS

1. When do I “act the fool”?
2. How do I fall into emptyheadedness?
3. Why is intentionality important in ethical choice?
4. How does wisdom inform my character?
5. What specific traits should biblical wisdom impact in me?

“Simple”

Wide-open to influences, whether good or bad, the “peti” (NIV, “simple” or “simple one”) acquires his label from something which is wide or open, spacious, vast and abundant in capacity. Simple ones “fall into” trouble. Simpletons have a way of finding distress since they are quite indiscriminating “shoppers” in the marketplace of life. Proverbs 9:13, 16

He is often characterized as an inexperienced child who stands on the corners of “decision” and “choice” unable to make up his mind. Proverbs 9:6, 14:18, 22:3

It is not that evil is hidden, for the wise plainly see the catastrophe about to happen (see chapter seven). Because the simple one does not give considerable thought to what may happen to him, he will walk right into the arms of a harlot, not knowing the misery of life that ensues with that relationship. The visual picture is of a child playing with matches.

Proverbs 7:7, 14:15

But unlike the other words for “fool,” this individual has the potential of being reached for the good. The simple person can be changed for the glory of God. Invasion and saturation of The Word softens his heart. Do not give up on the simpleton. Proverbs 19:25, 27:12

With faithful, persistent, consistent teaching, he will learn! Proverbs 19:25, 21:11

The “inexperienced child syndrome”: What is needed? 1:4, 9:6, 14:15, 14:18

Spiritually “near-sighted”: What is the problem? 9:13, 9:16

Wearing a “moral blindfold”: What are the consequences? 1:22, 1:32, 22:3

Wearing “ear-muffs”: What course of action should the wise take? 1:22; 8:5; 9:4, 19:25

Wisdom: Creation & Revelatory Truth

“Why have scorn and mockery become a significant part of popular entertainment and why do people find them entertaining? Why, at the same time, are people in real life hypersensitive to the possibility that somebody has disrespected them?”

[Plantinga, *Engaging God’s World*]

Rebel – Refuse – Repulse – Revile

The MOCKER “Turns up his nose” at any type of authority, or teaching.

No use for truth, education (12.23; 15.2; 29.6)

“Can’t wait to eat his own vomit” (26.11)

The MOCKER says it’s his way or the highway (18.2, 26.12, 28.26, 30.32). He is hotheaded (29.11), Reckless (14.16), panders in mindless amusements (19.10), it is better an angry bear (28.26), and keep money away from him since he is a financial disaster (17.16)

AUTHORITY: What is the cultural source or origin of authority?

Experience, Reason, Culture, Celebrity (money, sex, power), Tradition, Revelation

AUTHORITY: What is the Christian source or origin of authority?

1. Creational Truth

S.P.U.D. vs. C.R.U.D. Test; neurosciencenews.com; 29 November 2016 “Religious Beliefs Activate Neural Reward Circuits in Same Way As Sex and Drugs”

2. Revelational Truth [See next page]

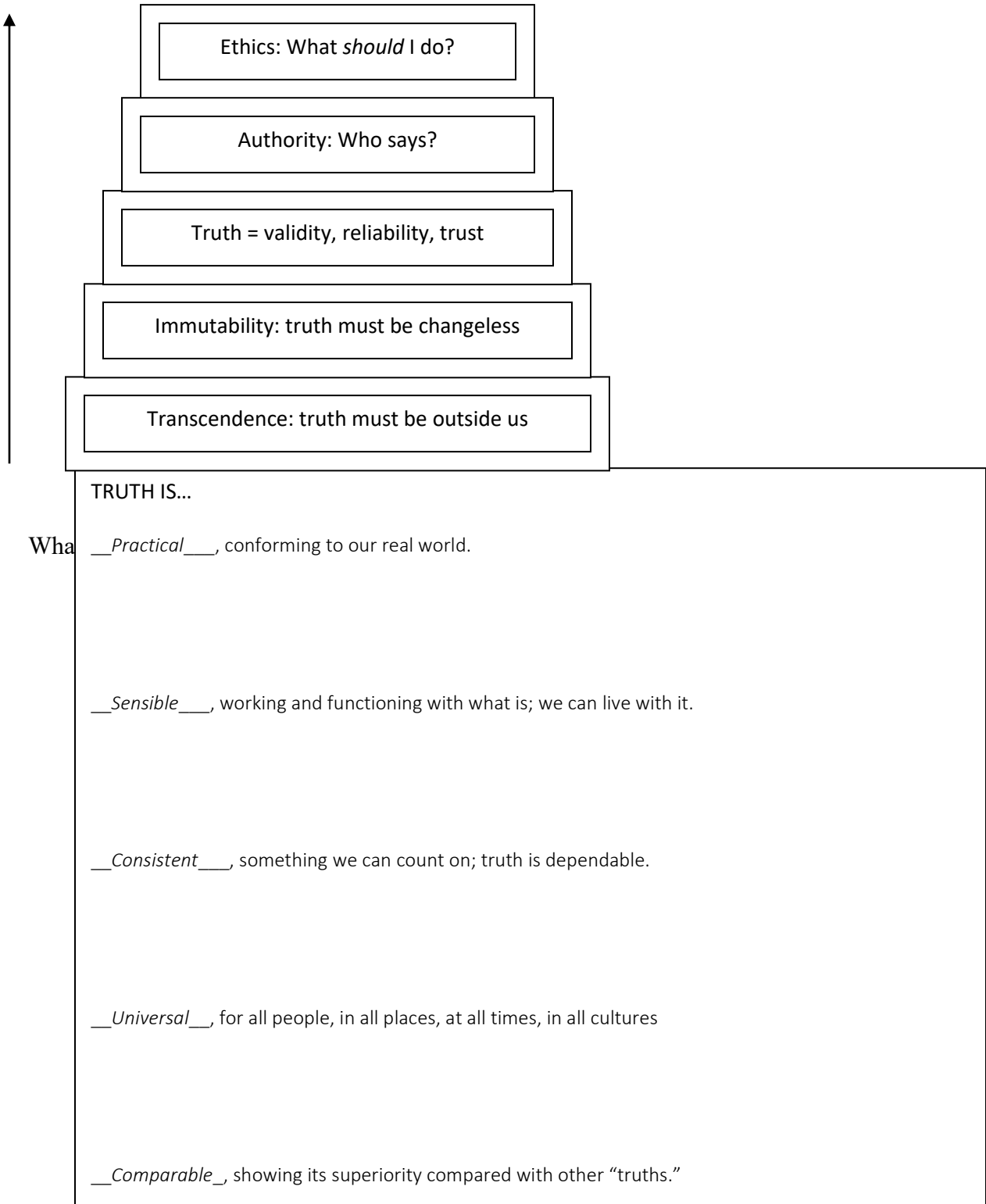
Just as old or bleary-eyed men and those with weak vision, if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume...yet can scarcely construe two words, but with the aid of spectacles will begin to read distinctly; so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God. [Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.6.1]

The general legislation of Leviticus shows that all life is lived under the watchful eye of God, and as a result it makes no artificial differentiation between what is holy and what is secular. A holy people will by their lives transform mundane things into beautiful and acceptable offerings to God... God’s holiness regulates and directs every area of human activity... all aspects of life under God are sacred. R. K. Harrison, *The Book of Leviticus*, pp. 32, 120.

QUESTIONS

1. Should Christians practice mockery?
2. Is there anything to be done for those who Rebel – Refuse – Repulse – Revile?
3. How do Christians point out the need for authority?
4. What examples of creational truth can I use in my neighborhood?
5. How can I practice revelational truth-telling in my home?

The acronym “EAT IT” (top to bottom) for a mnemonic device.



⁸ Mark Eckel, *Timeless Truth: An Apologetic for the Reliability, Authenticity, and Authority of the Bible*. Teacher’s Guide. Purposeful Design, 2001, p. 4

WISDOM: Virtue

“**GUIDANCE**” From the root “to take,” literally, “to be taken by” (7:21a) or persuaded in an argument (16:21, 23); the object is to “add to or increase” (1:5; 9:9). The idea is of grasping, holding on to and comprehending what is known in order to teach and persuade others is the order of the day (cf. Deuteronomy 32:2). Receiving knowledge focuses on perspective, namely acquiring a certain “mindset” or “way of thinking” (1:5b). □ “**OBTAIN**” From the root “rope or cord.” Ropes used to steer a ship, a sailor steered a true course. Plotting a wise path through life.

Proverbs 4:13 says, “Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.” Why is this admonition just as important today as it was in Solomon’s day?

Abraham Heschel has said, “What we need more than anything else is not *textbooks* but *text-people*. It is the personality of the teacher which is the text that the pupils read; the text they will never forget.” Why is this true?

“Interiority” can best be defined as having died to self, our “life is now hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3). Renunciation and relinquishment of everything that would impede the process of growth in Christ develops the inward life of the Christian. See J. Houston, *Joyful Exiles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 31-50.

A few years ago, a Christian school asked me to rewrite their handbook. Developing the “habits of the heart” theme I crafted a number of objectives that are drawn from an external source for an internal focus. The first four read:

1. The triune eternal personal Creator brought into reality a structured, patterned, ordered world which is both reliable and knowable, given for human good.⁹
2. We help to develop habits in children which are directed toward what God has established as creational law; the way life is to be properly lived. *Virtue* is the proper ordering of one’s life after God ordained ends. *Virtue* is the development of these good habits. *Virtue* is creating a disposition toward the good. To do good is first to think and be good.¹⁰
3. God has created us for Himself. The proper response to God and His world is tied to a proper relationship with Him and His creation.¹¹
4. We are about building the interior life of a child with the help of the Spirit, under authority of the Word of God. Some refer to these as “spiritual disciplines.”¹²

⁹ Created out of nothing (Romans 4:17) the creation is the personal, intimate (Amos 4:13) work of its Creator (Proverbs 3:19-20; 8:27; Jeremiah 33:2). The sustaining governance of the world’s systems has been embedded within creation itself (Psalm 33:9; “stood firm” suggests a governor of creation maintains, supports, and oversees the works of God’s hands) evidenced through natural law—the reliable works of God’s creation (Job 28:25-26; Psalm 148:6; Proverbs 8:29) which can be known by humans (Job 28:3, 11). In this way, the discovery of knowledge by people is inexhaustible (Job 26, esp. v. 14).

¹⁰ Since we are new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) we are created to do good works (Eph 2:10) but must appropriate virtuous characteristics to be effective and productive believers (2 Peter 1:3-11). Our responsibility demands effort to possess virtuous qualities demonstrating our Christian belief.

¹¹ To encourage young people to “remember the Creator in the days of their youth” (Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:1) is an important foundation stone for life.

¹² Galatians 5:13-6:5.

Values can be characterized as

- (1) arbitrary—individual or institutional choice reigns,
- (2) acceptable—current conditions or culture dictates what matters most,
- (3) authority—tied to the consumer, “what sells”

We develop habits established as creational law; the way life is to be properly lived.

- Virtue is the proper ordering of one’s life after God ordained ends.
 - Virtue is the development of these good habits.
 - Virtue is creating a disposition toward the good. To do good is first to think and be good.
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- Orthodoxy—straight teaching (mind)
 - Orthopraxy—straight living (behavior)
 - Orthopathos—straight desire (attitude)

QUESTIONS

“I don’t want to be successful in things that don’t matter.” My friend’s words still ring in my ears. He wanted to set aside the valuing processes established by a pagan culture. I constantly ask myself these questions: (1) “Is this thing an eternal focus?” (2) “Does this activity promote virtuous living?” (3) “Am I reading what will build internal fortitude?” (4) “Do I practice justice, prudence, temperance, and courage as the framework of my being?” (5) “Is what I see always seen through what is unseen?” Virtues should trump values. Otherwise, weak words make for a weak life.

QUOTES

- *The true university’s quest for interdisciplinary Truth may be properly called “Christian,” . . . because those who seek the truth without reserve, whether they know it or not, are ultimately searching for the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. John Polkinghorne*
- The true university’s quest for interdisciplinary Truth may be properly called “Christian,” . . . because those who seek the truth without reserve, whether they know it or not, are ultimately searching for the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Philip Ryken
- The earliest Christian apologists—Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Ignatius of Antioch—defended Christians to Roman persecutors with this dictum: Christians provided Rome with the best citizens, because Christians contributed to the social good of the empire. Christian ethics were built on Christian belief that right and wrong have a transcendent source in the Hebraic-Christian God, Yahweh, revealed in His Son, Jesus. Mark Eckel, “Social Ethics”

Wisdom: Wisdom and Culture

Prudence or shrewdness is an understanding how corrupt culture works while clearly living life within transcendent ethical boundaries.

What principles do I take away?

Cyrus, king of Persia. Pagan, unbelieving king. In God's Providence, his view of subjugation was different than that of Assyria (displacement), Babylonia (emplacement). Cyrus believed in replacement. Isaiah 44.24 – 45.1 "Messiah" = one called to a special task

How to live in a pagan world necessitates 'prudence'

- Learn to speak so others will hear
- Learn both sides of issues
- Learn to step outside political ties
- Learn 'winsome' language
- Learn the cultural language
EX: "Importance of Place," Riverside Speaks, HB & the Black Barbershop

"Prudence" (ESV)

- Prudence gives the impression of one "who has been around," "a man of the world" (wise to it, understanding of its ways, therefore careful of his relationship with it). Pro 1.4a
- Lower expectations: do not think everyone operates on your standards
- Learn how to ask questions

"Been there, done that"

- "Been there, done that" = hard, ethical questions.
- He ponders: he is aware, alert, attune, attentive (4.26)
- She acts upon preconceived, planned, well established set of spiritual standards (5.1 v 5.6)
- "Where did you learn *that*?!"

"Knows the ropes" (nautical)

- A person with the prudence knows what is the right reaction to the foreign stimulus of moral evil and follows through with it.
- This word is often contrasted with those called "simple" (22:3), who are told to be directed by the individual who "knows the ropes" spiritually (1:4a)

Being "prudent" in Proverbs 12.16, 23; 14.8, 15; 22.3; 27.12

Luke 16.1-9 parable of the shrewd steward

The cunning prepare for the future, ever mindful of potential enemy tactics, savvy in dealings with unbelievers. Christians should be serpent-like in their exercise of caution and wariness. Instead of a "frontal assault," a feint "up the middle" while "circling 'round the flank'" might be a better tactic living in a pagan world.

"Dishonesty" is obvious, but the attitude behind the action is clearly approved. The steward sought those who would benefit from his "cutting a deal" securing acceptance by others after his firing. Our Lord suggests that people of the light should attract those who might come to faith (16:9) rather than driving them away, putting off people by, perhaps, a poor attitude.

The unjust steward was providing for his own future—after his “pink slip” from the employer he had “greased the skids” in anticipation of his next position. Diplomacy is being used to accomplish one’s ends; in this case, a self-centered motive. Instead of attraction for future gain (heaven) Jesus seems to lament that believers drive away the very people who would be reached.

No one teaches because they think they’re wrong, however . . .

- Flip-the-script
- “What would happen if you’re wrong?”
- Case studies allow people to come to their own conclusions
- Measure, choose our words wisely
- What do we want to be known for?

We play by the rules of corrupt systems for the benefit of The Kingdom so that no one will have anything bad to say about us (Titus, 1 Peter). We do not revel in “missed calls” as an excuse for unethical performance but make good use of all allowable plays to “score.” **Shrewdness is an attitude of understanding to know how corrupt culture works while clearly living life within transcendent ethical boundaries.**

Do we practice:

- Intentionality (place ourselves in positions of influence, Daniel)
- Expertise (other people want what we have, Solomon)
- Study (Psalm 111.2)
- Pondering (alert, attune, aware, attentive)
- Better than “flying off the handle”
- Better than “My way or highway”
- Better than “How can you believe *that?!?*”
- It is better to be silent and be thought a fool than to speak up and remove all doubt.

Questions:

1. Do we spend time to understand the culture, history, or language of issues before speaking?
2. Do we consider how to communicate our point of view with winsomeness, attractiveness, humility, and honesty?
3. Do we know the other side of the story? Do we know the best arguments presented by opponents?
4. Do we live with respect for the authorities given by God?
5. Do we think about the future, not living in the past, conscious of the fact that we will need to know “when to hold ‘em, when to fold ‘em?”

“**Cunning**” in **Matthew 10.16** is wrapped in a passage whose direct instruction is for how to interact with a world which will reject The Message as well as the messengers. The context seems to suggest a violent response. The word in question is linked directly (“therefore”) to the preceding statement “I send you out as sheep among the wolves.” Rejection (10:14), deception (10:17), physical punishment (10:17), and illegal internment (10:18) before unjust authorities (10:19) is the lot of those who speak in The Name. “Shrewd” is the imperative “beware”—to watch out, be on one’s guard (Matt 7:15; 16:6, 11, 12; Luke 20:46; etc.). Jesus is saying believers are *not* to be naïve, unnecessarily provocative, unsuspecting, or ignorant of the schemes of those bent on our destruction (Eph 6:11; 2 Cor 11:3). The idea of “cunning” resident within the instruction Jesus gives (10:11-20) is clearly an encouraged character trait.

Luke 16 is the parable of the unjust steward which has direct connection to Jesus' commendation of "shrewdness" (16:8). While "dishonesty" is not lost upon the reader, the attitude behind the action is clearly approved. The steward sought those who would benefit from his "cutting a deal" securing acceptance by others after his firing. Our Lord suggests that people of the light should attract and keep close those who might come to faith (16:9) rather than driving them away, putting off people by, perhaps, a poor attitude. The unjust steward was providing for his own future—after his "pink slip" from the employer he had "greased the skids" in anticipation of his next position. Diplomacy is being used to accomplish one's ends; in this case, a self-centered motive. Instead of attraction for future gain (heaven) Jesus seems to lament that believers instead drive away the very people who would be reached.

In both contexts, the idea of "cunning" seems to indicate planning ahead, foresight, using what is at one's disposal to procure necessities for the future. Jesus acknowledges one aspect of the steward's approach to his situation and in so doing suggests that believers use what earthly goods they have now for benefit of The Kingdom now and not yet (16:9). "Cunning" is preparedness (Matt 25:1-14) within the positive perspective of "faithfulness" (Matt 24:45). Surely the wise builder (Matt 7:24) planned ahead.

A snake is symbolic of deception (notably Jesus calls the Pharisees as much in Matt 3:7; 12:34; 23:33) and cunning (2 Cor 11:3). Serpents lurk in unexpected places (Gen 49:17; Ecc 10:8; Am 5:19) while their ability to discern paths among the rocks is described as a mystery which cannot be understood (Prov 30:19). Wisdom literature seems to suggest the enigma of an eagle, virgin, ship, and snake is the ability of each to find its way without a guide, privy to no map, discovering the best way on its own.

Paul seems to have practiced a certain kind of canniness—his own personal "getaway"—in dealing with pagans. Reading Acts 21:27-26:32 one retains the distinct impression that Paul was nimble with his words, adroit in employment of his citizenship, and schooled in using societal law for his own ends. Acts 24:16 marks the purity of motive while using "the system" for Paul's own ends: clearly a shrewd move. Paul's ministry began with intrigue. He used clandestine information and a cunning escape to combat his enemies (Acts 9:23-25). "Try to be kind to everyone" (1 Thess 5:15) is as interesting a phrase as "if it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with all men" (Rom 12:18). Obviously, while we should not look for trouble we should be ready for it.

Furthermore, the apostle commands "be careful how you live, not as unwise but as wise" (Eph 5:15). In communication with "outsiders" Christians are told to be "wise" seasoning speech with "salt" (Col 4:5-6). Perhaps Titus 2:1-10 best expresses the sentiment of how Christians are to present themselves to the culture. The three purpose clauses ("so that" 2:5, 8, 10) demand believers live life in a proper attitude with attraction as the end result.

I suggest a definition of "shrewdness" as preparing for the future, ever mindful of potential enemy tactics, savvy in dealings with unbelievers. Christians should be serpent-like in their exercise of caution and wariness. Instead of a "frontal assault," a feint "up the middle" while "circling 'round the flank'" might be a better tactic living in a pagan world. As soldiers say, discretion is the better part of valor. Clear motives are in evidence as is the astute ability to stay out of harm's way. Diplomacy without compromise is a biblical moniker. We play by the rules of corrupt systems for the benefit of The Kingdom so that no one will have anything bad to say about us. We do not revel in "missed calls" as an excuse for unethical performance but make good use of all allowable plays to "score." Shrewdness is an understanding how corrupt culture works while clearly living life within transcendent ethical boundaries.

Wisdom: Justice

If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. (Isaiah 58:10 ESV)

The Problem with “Social Justice” The wealthy wrongly believe that their social generosity ends with what they can write off on their taxes. The poor wrongly expect justice is government serving as the nanny state for life. Charles Dickens’ *The Christmas Carol* demonstrates both problems with social justice: government is not our nanny, the wealthy should be more generous.

The Image of God Because we bear the image of The One who is the Just Judge. However, we struggle to restrain ourselves from revenge while we enact movement toward justice (Prov 20:22; Is 58-59; Rom 12:17-21; Heb 10:30). Herein is the conundrum of films like *Punisher* or *Law Abiding Citizen*. We like to see recompense in movies—the innocent cry for justice—knowing that the ultimate recompense is yet to come (Rev 22:10-13, 15).

Evil Men are Stopped when Good People Do Something Proverbs 28 and 29 give instruction on ruling with justice and what happens when unjust authorities thrive. 28:3 “A ruler who oppresses the poor is like a driving rain that leaves no crops.” 28:12 “When the righteous triumph, there is great elation; but when the wicked rise to power, men go into hiding.” 28:28 “When the wicked rise to power, people go into hiding; but when the wicked perish, the righteous thrive.” 29:4 “By justice a king gives a country stability, but one who is greedy for bribes tears it down.” 29:7 “The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern.” 29:12 “If a ruler listens to lies, all his officials become wicked.” 29:14 “If a king judges the poor with fairness, his throne will always be secure.” 29:18 “Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law.” 29:26 “Many seek an audience with a ruler, but it is from the Lord That man gets justice.”

May We Stand Against... sanctimonious self-congratulation because “our way is the right way.” vilification of anyone because “their group believes a lie.” prejudiced information because “our news source is always correct.” poisonous language because “they are terrible people.” arrogant attitudes because “our heart is right with God.” May We Christians... encourage those who do good no matter their viewpoints (Titus 3.1, 8, 14). lead with mercy, never trafficking in vile or vitriol (Eph 4.31-32).

be known for our love, others seeing that we are Jesus’ disciples (John 13.35). stand for right against wrong, winning the respect of outsiders (1 Peter 3.16). respect our authorities so that we might live our lives in peace (1 Tim 2.2).

Declarations 1. Transcendent Truth exists, providing objective standards for peoples, cultures, times, and places. 2. Ethics have an Eternal point of reference. Justice exists and can be lived as a chosen lifestyle.

3. Hebraic-Christian views are believed not because they are better, but because they are distinctive.

4. Reality is not a social construct; rather a created order, designed by The Personal God, for human beneficence. 5. Authority is the basis for ethics. “What is right and wrong?” is answered by “Who says?”

There can be no peace without justice. There can be no justice without righteousness. So, justice is impossible if it’s left up to just us (Ecc 3.16 – 4.3). If there is no justice after life, there can be no justice in this life. Short-term versus long-term response to injustice. Indignation is a proper, personal response to injustice. The only possible redemption available is the unadulterated innocence of Jesus’ sacrifice.

Justice is Served—Isaiah 58 and 59¹³

1. Why did the people think themselves religious (58:1-3)?
2. What identified the people's conduct that showed their religion to be corrupt? (58:3-14)
3. What did the Lord identify as actions that would demonstrate true religion? (58:6-14)
4. What would be the results if the answers to question #3 were followed? (58:8-14)
5. Make a list of metaphors, similes, or word pictures that God uses to describe the people's sin (59:1-11). Why are these word pictures used?
6. List all the words that parallel "justice" in 59.1-15 (for example: "no one calls for *justice*, no one pleads his case with *integrity*", v. 4). Why are these important?
7. List the specific offenses of 59:12-15, describing them in your own words so that they apply to our lives today (for example: "rebellion and treachery against the Lord"—we know what is right but refuse to do it; we plot, we look for ways to get around God's righteous standards).

Situational Justice? Responding as Christians

A woman and a man hold the same job in the company where they work. The male is paid more, although his responsibilities and productivity are exactly the same as that of his female counterpart.

Knowing only this information, what is your first response? Could there be an ethically correct reason for this financial inequity to exist? If so, what would it be? If the female worker discovered this information and asked you what she should do, how would you respond?

A Muslim and a Christian both commit the same crime of burning down the home of a family who opposes their religion. Both are captured in the act on video by amateur photographers; in each situation, the prosecution uses the video as evidence. In the end, one man receives lesser jail time than the other.

Knowing only this information, what is your first response? Could there be any ethically correct reason for this legal inequity to exist? If so what would it be? Did the ethnicity of either person figure into your decision? Why or why not? If you could interview the jurors in both cases, what questions would you ask? Based on your knowledge of world events since 9-11 do you think that past injustices can be "evened out" in the present? Explain.

A certain minority group in the state is not represented in the Congress because there is not a majority of that group in any district. Through gerrymandering (the process by which districts are organized along ethnic or political lines so as to elect a specific kind of candidate) a member of the minority group is elected to Congress.

Is political justice serviced by this process? Explain. Should laws be passed that require a quota (i.e., a specific number) of representatives from minority groups? Why or why not? How would you feel if there were few or no representatives of your ethnic background in Congress? What would you do if the situation existed in your district?

¹³ Taken from Mark D. Eckel, *Let God Be God: A Study of the Attributes of God*, 1997, 2003. Purposeful Design.