

Dr. Gary Meadors, Knowing God's Will, Session 4a, The Will of God in the Old Testament, Part 2

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Welcome back to the second part of GM4, the will of God in the Old Testament. Unfortunately, we had to divide this because of the lengths. And you're on slide number 23 in your notes, Defining Wisdom in the Bible, point number five in terms of the outline that we've been following there.

This is lecture 4B. The other one would be 4A. This is 4B of GM4, and you can have the slides and the notes that you have available.

There was so much material that I knew was coming, and we were already seven minutes, 70 minutes into the last lecture. I didn't want to violate time any more than I had to. All right, let's get together again.

I'll just remind you that our pattern is that we all pray before and after, but we don't do it to the camera. And so I'd ask you to ask God to help you as you listen to this talking head. And I hope that notes help you to see the material, stop and read text, and deal with the material as we go along so that you're learning, not just listening.

You have to be a learner. All right, let's go to Defining Wisdom in the Bible, slide number 23. All right, now the Hebrew term for wisdom is hokmah, and it occurs quite a bit in the Old Testament.

The Septuagint term is Sophia, which is probably a word that's familiar to you. The word feminine, Sophie, is part of the word wisdom. And when the Septuagint translates the Hebrew, it typically renders hokmah as sophia. This is because its usage covers a very broad range.

But there's one thing about the word wisdom in its translation and in its contextual meaning, that it's usually got something to do with skill, either the skill to do something like run a boat or the skill to understand something, the skill to understand your experience. The skill is always at the core of this, even though translations will render it as skill sometimes, as wisdom sometimes. And since I have the advantage of having a little more time available for this lecture, I'm going to read the verses a little more than I did.

Last time, I was reading from the American Standard Version of 1901, and it still uses a lot of King Jimmy-type language, and you get tongue-tied, so I'm going to use the English Standard Version. We call it the ESV, which is a translation or rendition, or an

update, I should say, of the New Revised Standard. It's not a fresh translation, but it is a rendition of that in an updated way.

All right, let's move along now and think about this. Its usage covers a broad range. For example, it covers the issue of technical skill.

In Exodus chapter 28 and verse 3, perhaps you've already read these, but I will read them to you now. Exodus chapter 28, I'm not going to read the context, just the passage. You shall stick to all the skillful.

That word skillful in the ESV, and we've already been over Bible versions, it may be something different than yours. That word, that's the word for *hokmah*, that's the word for wisdom, to all the skillful whom I have filled with a spirit of skill.

There it is again, and that's an interesting way to put it, isn't it? A spirit of skill. That's not talking about the Holy Spirit. It talks about their capacities and ability to function.

And so you're going to get these skillful people that I've even enhanced, as it were, that they make errands, garments to consecrate Him for my priesthood. So they contracted people, and many times it was within Israel, perhaps at this point, but there are other places where skill was used, like in the building of the temple. They used people from other cities, from other cultures, actually, for those constructions, and they were skilled in temple building.

And that's another whole subject that we can't go into at this point. So they're skillful, 28. Look at 31:3, Exodus 31:3. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship.

The word *Chokmah* is internal to that passage as we move along. Verse 4, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, and cutting stones for setting, carving wood, to work in every craft. And behold, I have appointed with him *Oheliah*, the son of *Hamishapach*, of the tribe of Dan.

And I have given to all able men ability, that they may all, that they make all that I have commanded you. So this ability idea, all these men have skill. It doesn't translate the word as wisdom.

It translates it in other ways, and there'll be a variety. Sometimes, it's the word skill. Sometimes, it's the word ability, and so forth.

So, but the main point I want to make is that it has to do with, wisdom has to do with skill. 1 Chronicles chapter 22 and verse 15. We have the privilege of a little more time, so I get to read some things.

1 Chronicles 22:15. Dropping in again, which is never a good idea. You have an abundance of workmen, stone cutters, masons, carpenters, and all kinds of craftsmen, without number, skilled.

There's our word, hokmah, wisdom, and skill in working. We could go on and on. So there's technical skill.

There's passage of when Jonah was on the ship, and it talks about the captain of that ship. It said that he was skilled and that he couldn't control the storm. Very skilled.

So the word skill in your translations oftentimes will have underneath of it that word for wisdom because wisdom is skill. In our subject of discernment, wisdom is the skill to study the scriptures, engage your worldview and values, and make decisions. Let's go along here.

Not only is it technical skill, but it can be understanding or experience. In Genesis 41, Genesis 41:33. You have to excuse me, my eyes aren't so great, so you'll see me looking real close here.

Now, therefore, Pharaoh selected a discerning and wise man and sent him over the land of Egypt. Now, this is when they were looking at the famine and lack of grain, and he needed someone to manage that. He needed a wise man.

But you see, that's the same word. And what's the point here? He needed someone skilled in business and management so that they would not go hungry as the famine came over. Sent him over the land of Egypt.

Let's see how far I want to read. 33 and 39. I'm not going to read all that.

Pharaoh proceeded to appoint overseers over the land and take one-tenth of the produce, and so forth. But it was a person who was wise, but it wasn't wise, it was skill. It was skill as wisdom.

Okay? Job chapter 12, verse 2, verse 1. Then Job answered and said, No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you, but I have understanding as well as you. Notice how the words wisdom and understanding are parallel here. But the word wisdom is here.

We could just as well say that your skill of knowledge will die with you. They use it as a translation for wisdom here in the ESV. I have a book of other versions to see what they do, but that's what the word is.

But here, the concept is wisdom. And as the parallel says, I have an understanding as well as you. I'm not inferior to you.

So it has to do with understanding and your intellectual capacities. Let's look at verse 12, Job verse 2, verse 12. Wisdom is with the aged and understanding in the length of day.

That's what's known as synonymous parallelism. Wisdom and understanding are equivalent. The first phrase gives one word, and the next phrase gives another.

We'll see this in some other places as well. Wisdom is with the aged and understanding in length of days. In our culture, in America, in the United States, old people are set aside.

They're viewed as sort of useless. And maybe some are, but the fact is that in many ways, they have the wisdom of time and experience and the acquisition of knowledge. And to set them aside is a bad idea and a dangerous thing.

So, wisdom is understanding in relation to experience. In Isaiah chapter 5 and verse 21, we've seen verses already that relate to other parts of our education. Let me get over this.

In Isaiah 5:21, woe to those who are wise in their own eyes. In other words, they are shrewd in their own sight. See, wise and shrewd are in parallel.

Wise in their own eyes, shrewd. In other words, they're skillful. In this kind of passage, I'd say they're probably skillful in evil.

They're skillful on manipulation. All cult leaders are skillful. You could say they're wise.

Well, I wouldn't want to call them that. I'd rather call them skillful so that the word wise doesn't get misunderstood. So, this issue of wisdom, shrewdness, and understanding is parallel on many occasions.

So when we talk about wisdom, we're talking about skill. What does it mean to be a wise person? It means a person who is skillful in living, skillful in obeying God, and skillful in investigating scriptures so that we can have a transformed mind. And from that, we have a worldview, a values complex that we can recognize and apply.

Now, text is translated as a skill. Different translations will provide a variety, but you've learned how to compare translations now. And if you have the ability to get into the languages of the Bible, that will help even more.

But you can go to the translations that you have. You've got to have that awareness. I've tried to give you an awareness of how translation does things.

So this word that's translated skill and translated with different translations will deal with it, but you've got to be able to notice that it does, at the end of the day, have something to do with skill. So wisdom is skillful living. If you want to find someone who says, what does it mean to be wise? The answer is wisdom is skillful living.

That means I understand life and live skillfully by it. I understand God's word, and I'm skillful in living out that word. But that's at the root and the basis of the whole idea of wisdom.

We miss that, I think, the occurrence. We kind of etherealize the word wisdom. My dad, I don't know if I mentioned this to you as an illustration, but I was with my dad on a number of occasions, and we'd be talking to some other man that my dad knew.

When we got done, dad walked away. He'd tell me, son, he's a wise man. Listen to what he has to say.

Do you know what my dad meant? He says what I like to hear. That's what he really meant. He agreed with him.

So you have to judge if a person is wise, not just on the basis that they sound good, but are able to correlate with a good transformed mind, worldview, and values complex so that their advice and their decisions are good. Now, there are a lot of texts that render hook, loss, and skill. And here's just a few of them.

You've got, thank you. Exodus, I'm not going to read these to you. Exodus 35:26, the skill to weave.

This was probably in relation to the building of the tabernacle. The words used there are a lot for the people that are acquired to do the garments and the skins and all the building. Exodus 35, again, is the ability or skill to teach.

Now, if a good teacher is a wise person, why? Because he can skillfully help you understand the scriptures. Exodus 36, the skill to build the sanctuary. A carpenter is a wise man with wood.

He has the skill to build, the skill to measure twice, and only cut once, as the proverb goes. Second Chronicles, the skill with raw materials and construction. I watch workers from time to time, like Wilford or something.

They have great skill, and they're wise. They know not to get in certain situations on that road because their skill has given them the experience to make those kinds of judgments. Ecclesiastes 2, the skill to work or the skill for a career.

You might be wise in business. That means you're skilled in business, okay?
Ecclesiastes 10, skill with an axe. In the ancient world, that was pretty important in early America when they cleared and destroyed the forests, to be frank.

It's amazing how these persons were skilled with an axe with trees that might be five feet wide. Ezekiel 28, skilled in business. Solomon was called wise as a ruler.

That meant he was skilled. When the two women came to him with one child, his wisdom came out, and the real mother stepped forward to protect the child, and that indicated who the real mother was. That was wisdom, but it was skill to deal with that situation and come to an appropriate conclusion.

So, wisdom and scripture. And in the general world, to be frank, if we really investigated it closely, because wisdom is not *sui generis*. That's a phrase that means self-originate.

Wisdom does not self-originate. It comes from learning. It comes from experience, and usually, hopefully, it comes with age.

And it's across the board. Evil people are skilled in evil. Godly people are skilled in obedience to God.

So, wisdom is skillful learning, skilled for us in the application of God's teaching for living. Read the My Son poems, which are Proverbs 1 to 9, and notice what Solomon wanted his son to have the skill to do. The Proverbs are really renditions of what it means to be skillful and to be wise in your environment, and that's what wisdom is.

Wisdom is skill. Wisdom is not just somebody who has an idea and sounds good. Wisdom is the skill to connect lines of reason from life, scripture, and your profession so that you show the ability to be successful in that regard.

Okay, slide 25. The classic text on wisdom. Here's one that's amazing.

I don't know why I didn't write this down in Proverbs. The fear, but you know by heart, I think it's Proverbs 9:10, somewhere, 10, 9:10. I always get it.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. Everybody can quote the first half. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

I don't know many people who can follow up with the second half, and yet the second half, as in parallelism in Hebrew poetry, defines the first half, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. I put into yellow there that fear is

equivalent to knowledge and vice versa, and wisdom is equivalent to understanding. So to fear God is to know God and to have knowledge of God.

It's not just to be afraid of God, but it is to have respect. It is to have a deep level of understanding where you respect God in such a way that you know that disobedience will cause real fear to enter the equation. So, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

The knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. What is wisdom? Wisdom is understanding. Wisdom isn't a shot in the dark.

Let me give you an illustration that may or may not be helpful. But the father's in the basement of a house, and there's the old wooden staircase going downstairs. But he doesn't have the lights on because there's enough ambient light for him to get what is going on.

But this little girl, about three or four years old, is at the top of the stairs, and she can't seem to come down. And she says, Daddy, if I jump, will you catch me? Now she's jumping where? Into the dark. She says, Daddy, will you catch me? And Daddy may say, Oh, don't do that.

Or Daddy may say, Yes, I'll catch you. And she jumps. And guess what? Daddy caught her.

A lot of people would take an illustration like that and use it as faith. Do you have faith to jump? But here's the problem. It's faith to jump into what? Into the dark.

And the illustration breaks down at that point because faith never jumps into the dark. It jumps into the light. To make that illustration biblical, Daddy just needs to turn on the light so the little girl can see him.

Her faith becomes a reality. Here's Dad. He's going to catch me.

Now wisdom is understanding. It's not a cereal. And in America, we had an advertisement for a candy bar.

The candy bar was called Almond Joy. It was a bounds Almond Joy. It had coconut, chocolate covering, and almond.

Very good if you have a chance to get one. Okay. Almond Joy candy bar.

On TV, they had an advertisement. And they would present their candy bar. And then the tagline was this.

It is indescribably delicious. Indescribably delicious. It's so good.

Well, I love to use that as an illustration of wisdom and of faith. Faith and wisdom are not indescribably delicious. Like that little girl jumped into a dark basement.

It was indescribable in terms of how she trusted her dad, whom she could not see. But listen, the Bible turns the lights on. It turns the lights on.

So it's no longer indescribably delicious, but it's describable. Wisdom is not random things that pop into our minds unless it's the result of experience and so forth. It gets kind of complicated psychologically here.

But the fact is, fear is knowledge. Wisdom is understanding. It's the skill to obey God.

I mentioned the note of the parallelism, and I explained it to you. Fear is not merely fear but an attitude of submission to your sovereign. Based on you shall know the Lord, and him only shall you serve.

Fear relates to the consequences of failure. Serve the Lord is another phrase. Fear and serve actually almost become a duet in Scripture.

Fear the Lord to serve the Lord. So, to fear is to serve. To fear is to know and to understand.

So look at that yourself. Do your own Bible study on these words. It's very, very interesting.

So knowledge, fear, wisdom, they're all sort of intertwined. Okay, now I'm ready to go on now. Wisdom is skillful living.

So wisdom does not mean do what makes sense to you, or do what makes sense to that older person who told you. You don't, and wisdom is something you have to make a decision about. You might have a board of elders in the church who are well-being.

That may even be older and have experience. But as you watch them operate, you realize they don't have much skill. They're not asking the right questions.

And if you don't ask the right questions, you'll get the wrong answer. And so it's a very tricky thing in life. Wisdom does not mean doing what makes sense to you.

You always have to ask not what makes sense but what is right, what is appropriate, and what best correlates with my worldview of values as I recognize them and apply

them in life. Now, we all need help. And sometimes we may think we're right when we're wrong, not morally, but in just the wisdom of living, the skillful living business.

That's why we have a community. So, if you say that wisdom means doing what makes sense to you, what you are is a pragmatist. A pragmatist does what makes sense to me.

There's no line of reason for whether it's right or wrong. It's just what makes sense to me. That's not decision-making.

Now, if you're particularly skilled, what makes sense to you may be good, but that's not the paradigm that you want someone else to get because you're way ahead of them in terms of the fact that what makes sense to you has been processed through that transformed world. So be careful with that. A wise decision is one in which you can show lines of reason that move from a biblical worldview system to the decision.

In other words, you never do anything by accident. You may think you do, but internally, too, your mind is working in a way that led you into that. And you didn't stop.

You may have wondered, but you didn't evaluate. You've got to have lines of reason that move from a biblical worldview value system to the decision. You've got to be able to answer the question, why? I used to have students come into my office when I was teaching for a brief time in a college before I started teaching in seminary.

And they'd come into my office, and I'd seen them in the hallway. In fact, in the hallway, you didn't dare walk between them because they were, you know, you had to go around them because they were just so much in love with you. So, they'd come into my office and sit down across from my desk, and they'd say, they'd say, we thought about getting married.

And you know what my first question is? Why? And they kind of look at me like, are you stupid? Haven't you seen us? Haven't you seen how we can't be without each other and we just croon over each other and we desire to support each other? Haven't you seen that? Why would you ask us why? You should already know. Well, my question is the same. Why do you want to get married? And then you know that their next answer would be this: because we just love each other so much.

We just want to be with each other all the time. Do you know what my next question is? Why? Why? Because those answers are not explanations. They're feelings.

They're experience that isn't experienced enough. Okay. And so I keep asking that question why, like a child who comes to you really honestly wanting to understand the world and ask you why, why, why.

After a while, you're so worn out that you don't know what to do. And you can't even answer some of those questions. They're over your head.

So you can answer the question of why if you have lines of reason from a biblical worldview and value system to their decision. Now, here's the trick. Just because you haven't recognized the biblical worldview and value system doesn't necessarily mean you're right.

Paul had a biblical worldview and value system when he persecuted Christians. He was so strong in his values and in his worldview. Jesus had to get him on a Damascus road and say looky here Paul, I need you, and you're going to come. You're going to start thinking better. He also changed his worldview and value system to a correct version.

So people and Christians and even leaders I've seen it so many times have a worldview and value system, and they may even be smart enough to know it. But they can be frankly evil in the application of it because they haven't self-critically evaluated their system.

I've seen leaders on numerous occasions, and we call them Prima donnas. They're narcissists. They're self-centered.

They want to be the center of all attention. They have ideas that don't match what is the appropriate way to do something. I've seen presidents in schools.

Christian schools, this is a disease. The president comes in and reframes everything to his own self. He'll call it his own vision.

But in education the vision is cast by the faculty and by the history of the school about what it means to educate a student. You don't come in and upset the apple cart. You come in, you learn it, you support it.

There may be some revisions, but you're not a kingdom to yourself. So this whole thing about wisdom and skillful living is not self-originated. It doesn't pop out of the blue into our minds, but it is the result of consistent and sustained work in the text of God's Word and in all the things that are attendant to that that we need in a sense.

So, the third point here is wisdom and skill in making decisions in relation to how the Bible applies to your questions and decisions. You can answer the question of why. Even if you need some adjusting, you can still answer the question of why.

Especially when there is no particular text to claim, now here's where the rubber hits the road, you see in the application of worldview and values.

When you don't have a proof text, don't go to the Bible to find one because you'll create it. It won't be what the Bible has. But there's a situation where you don't have direct teaching, as we talked about.

Direct, implied, creative construct. You've still got to answer it, and you've still got to be able to work with scripture through the implicational and construct levels to make wise decisions and pursue life appropriately. Now, I'm going to evaluate the works of Gary Friesen at the end of our lectures, but I want to make a statement here at the moment because it's in the context of talking about wisdom.

Friesen did a wonderful thing when he wrote *Decision Making and the Will of God*. It was a dissertation that he did at Dallas Seminary, and he really evaluated the Keswick movement in America. It was a very, very subjective movement that created ideas about knowing God's will that were completely off base.

They were very popular, and he did a good job of evaluating them. But he also presented his view, and there's much good about it. I actually used his book in the text in one of the sections of an ethics class that I taught in a Bible college.

And it was a bomb buster on the scene of the subjectivism of Baptists in that particular school. I almost got fired for using it because they didn't like what it was presenting. And I learned a lot from Gary Friesen.

But Gary Friesen also has some shortcomings. And many people will say, well, you and Friesen's views are similar. That's because you don't understand my view.

And yes, there's always similarities. We're using the same Bible. But there's a huge difference between Gary Friesen and myself in the processing of decisions and discernment.

Friesen's principle about wisdom is this, as quoted from page 199 of his original publication, which I think is his best. He did a redo of, I think, the 25th anniversary, but it wasn't as powerful as his first. He said this in non-moral decisions, okay? In other words, decisions where you don't have direct teaching.

The objective of the Christian is to make wise decisions. I agree. And then he says, on the basis of spiritual expediency.

Wow. Now that gets your attention. And you can go into his book, and he'll unpack that a bit.

But he doesn't unpack it the way the Bible unpacks wisdom. He doesn't unpack it the way ethical theory or philosophical categories would unpack it. It's a very generic and frankly, frankly, lay unpacking of the concept of wisdom.

And it just doesn't float. It can help you. It helped a lot of people, and it was a great deal.

But we don't have the same view at all. Our ideas of wisdom are on different planets. I do think that my idea of wisdom is more directly related to what the scriptures teach about the concept of wisdom in the Bible, and being skillful, living, and how you get it through direct teaching, applied teaching, and creating new constructs.

Chokmah. And by the way, that would have a C with moderate Hebrew, Chokmah, because the initial H is a hard H. Chokmah, however, sets a higher standard than expedience. Expediency goes back to your own personal wisdom that you don't have lines of reason to prove something.

You just do what you think. Now, it may not be that simple, and I'm sure anyone would think it's that simple. But the fact is that at the end of the day, it comes out that way.

Misusing the term spiritual in the statement, spiritual expediency, that phrase doesn't even relate to biblical statements. The word spiritual is only in the New Testament. Spirituality only occurs four times when a person is spiritual.

You got spiritual food and spiritual rock, but it's an adjective. Actually, the word spiritual is. Spiritual expediency. But what's spiritual? Well, I'm going to talk to you later about that.

But when he puts it into this phrase, that is about as subjective as the paradigm that he's actually evaluating. I'll say more later, but that's enough for now. Chokmah, however, sets a higher standard than expedience.

Misusing the term spiritual doesn't help. Brazen's concept of wisdom is deficient. Wisdom requires more biblical discipline and lines of reason.

In fact, when he looked at my work, and I think that was a superficial look by what he said, he said I just agreed with him. I had a wisdom view. Yeah, I got a wisdom view, but it's not in the same ballpark.

It's not another base in that ballpark, you know? And so consequently, while I really appreciate what he did in his work at the time that he did it, there are some things to be addressed that are extremely important about what it means to be wise. And if I don't get to that, then we'll just dig it out. All right.

There are some select readings on wisdom, and some bibliography, very, very thin overall, but you can get started looking at the biblical wisdom. We'd need 20 pages to put a bibliography on this. It's a huge domain.

Wisdom, literature in the Bible, and wisdom in the Bible, even when it's not in a wisdom book, it's very massive. Next, what are the conclusions to all this? Conclusions of the Old Testament and God's will. It's what Isaiah said in 816, bind up the testimony, seal up the law among my disciples.

Focus there. If you talked to a prophet about this and said, you know, Mr. Isaiah, I want to go out in the desert and pray so God can tell me what to do. Isaiah is kind of like Gibbs on the NCIS program of Naval Investigative Services. You know, he's got the head slap.

Isaiah would say, no, to the law and to the testimony, not the desert and your devotional life, because that's your own, that's yourself talking to yourself. You need to get deeply engrossed with the Word of God and with the values and the worldview and values that it provides and how that operates in the world. Isaiah 819, and when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits.

That's the other divination domain. And unto the wizards that chirp and mutter. I've heard a few sermons that way.

Should people not seek unto their God on behalf of the living? Should they seek unto the dead? And, of course, the answer is no. And then he says to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this Word, surely there is no light, no morning for them. They speak not according to this Word.

And I come across a lot of people who say, well, these voices that I hear in my head to tell me what to do, that I believe are God's voice, they never violate God's Word. Of course, they don't. Because you know what God's Word says, at least Selleck said, you're not going to do something stupid, but your paradigm is wrong.

I'm sorry. You've got to originate from Scripture into a transformed mind, which provides you with worldview and values, and you apply those to life. And it's a lifelong process of learning, revising, knowing better, and moving on.

I believe that is the way that God has created this to work. So that's the Old Testament and the concept of pleasing God, fulfilling God's desires, delighting God, and recognizing His purposes. Knowing the will of God in the Old Testament was a matter of worldview and values, from the law and the testimony into life.

The Book of Proverbs illustrates that. Thank you for listening to these two parts on the Old Testament and knowing God's will. Our next lecture, which is in your table of contents and which you should always follow, will be Lecture 5. Now, Lecture 4 is A and B. Lecture 5, The Will of God in the New Testament, is what we'll be looking at next.

So get your slides out, get your notes out, and we'll be discussing that in the next video. Thanks for your attention.