

THE WHEEL OF WISDOM

Overview Statement:

Biblical wisdom is God's instructions for living. We achieve the blessed, balanced life God intended when we carefully follow His instructions for all areas of life. There are three primary relationships – spiritual, physical and social – out of which all other relationships come. Knowing and applying biblical wisdom in each of these relationships will move us toward God's intentions for our life.

Main Ideas:

1. At creation God gave us three primary relationships – God/spiritual, creation/physical and people/social.
2. God gives us specific instructions for each of these relationships. These scriptural instructions are known as biblical wisdom.
3. Blessing and balance in life come from fulfilling God's instructions in all relationships.
4. We move steadily toward God's intentions when we are in balance in our lives.
5. Neglecting God's instructions brings destruction and imbalance in one or more of our relationships.

Outcomes:

1. Now:
 - a. To grasp and express the main ideas of the lesson in their own words.
 - b. To plan and carry out one new step in response to a main idea of this lesson bringing balance and wisdom in all relationships.
2. Beyond:
 - a. To recognize the need for balance in all our relationships, identify undeveloped areas and intentionally work to build those areas.
 - b. To work as a leader to inform, encourage and equip other believers to develop wisdom and balance in each of these primary relationships.

The Four Friends

Narrator: I'd like you to meet four friends—Fred Physical, Social Sonia, Wise Will, and Saintly Sue. [Change names to fit.] They will introduce themselves to you now!

Physical Character (acting like a body builder, always flexing muscles): I'm a much better person now that I have a body like Arnold Swarzenegger. Those six-hour workouts every day are great! My wife went to live with her mother so she would have someone to talk to—so now I have more time—and I've added aerobic exercises to my schedule! I have the perfect body. Everyone should be like me!

Social Area (happy, laughing, talking with many imaginary friends): I have so many friends, and I'm so happy. I'm planning a big party at my house this weekend, and you're all invited! And don't forget—bring a friend! No, I won't have time to go to (Insert name of today's meeting/conference.) with you today, but thanks! Maybe I'll go to church at Christmas, though! Guess what! Next week, I'm going to the theater, and a concert, and another party, and . . .!

Wisdom Area (showing superior intelligence, impressing people with knowledge): Did you know that the sun is 109 times bigger than Earth? And its surface temperature is about 6000°C, but that the interior may reach 13,000°C? I'm so smart—my IQ is 185. That makes me a genius! Everyone should be like me, and the world could advance to a higher level. (suddenly looking sad) Then, maybe I would be able to have some friends . . .

Spiritual Area (singing): “Holy, holy, holy—yes, I am so holy . . .” I'm so dedicated! I spend all week at church, I pray six hours a day, and I fast four days a week. But I'm so persecuted! The pastor and leaders don't give me respect! They don't agree with all my ideas! They have wrong doctrines! (suddenly very angry) Who do they think they are? What right does they have to criticize me? (suddenly pious) “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do . . .” (singing) “Holy, holy, holy—yes, I am so holy . . .”

- *CLUE THE CHARACTERS TO INTERACT FOR ONE MINUTE IN THEIR ROLES AFTER THEIR INTRODUCTIONS. THEY TALK SIMULTANEOUSLY AND PAY LITTLE ATTENTION TO EACH OTHER.*
- *STOP THEIR "COMMUNICATION," THANK THEM FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION, AND MAKE YOUR CLOSING REMARKS (BELOW).*

Narrator: When we talked about Luke 2:52, we heard that Jesus grew physically, spiritually, socially, and in wisdom. Then, we met these four friends. Each had grown in one area—though not quite in the way we studied! After meeting them, we have some good reasons to learn about balance in development.

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Participant Outline

I. Review

II. Introduction – “The Three Friends”

- A. What did you see in the role play?
- B. What did the characters lack? Did they have wisdom? Were they balanced?
- C. Why would it be difficult for these characters to listen to each other? Why would it be hard for them to serve others?

III. Key Verse: Psalm 111:10

- A. Who is the source of wisdom?
- B. People who follow God’s commands have “good understanding”. What do you think they understand?
- C. In which areas of life should we follow God’s instructions? How could His wisdom influence our actions, relationships, and decisions?

IV. Three Primary Relationships

Genesis 1:26a

Genesis 2:8

Genesis 2:18

- What are the three key relationships God gave us when He created mankind?

- What are common terms for these relationships? Which do you see in each passage?
- How would you define them? For example: Social relationships are our relationships with _____.
- What are some examples of spiritual, physical, and social relationships?

V. What is wisdom?

A. Read: *Psalms 111:10 Proverbs 2:5 I Cor. 1:23-24 James 3:13, 17*

- How is obedience related to wisdom?
- What are observable characteristics of wisdom in our lives?

B. Read: *Psalms 119:97-100 Proverbs 2:6 II Tim. 3:16 I Cor. 2:6-7, 12-13*

- Where does wisdom come from?
- Why is it important to acquire wisdom?

C. Read: *Prov 2:9-12 Prov 3:1-2 Prov 4:5-7 Col 1:9-12 Deut 28:2-6; 30:15-16*

- What is the value of wisdom?
- What is the requirement for receiving these benefits?

VI. Wisdom and the Three Relationships - *What is the connection between wisdom and the three primary relationships God gave us?*

VII. God put us in these relationships for a purpose. What responsibilities did God give us in each of these relationships?

A. Spiritually

B. Socially

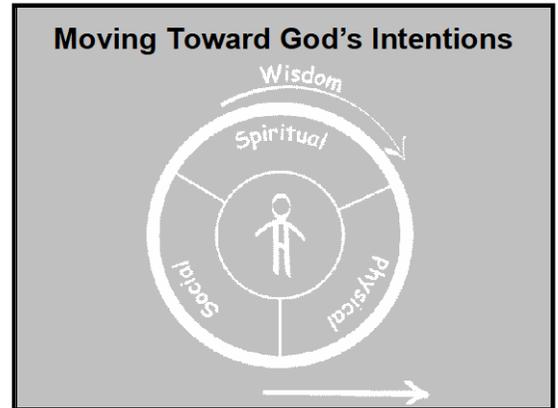
C. Physically

VIII. The Wheel of Wisdom

A. What happens when the three spokes are strong and the rim is complete?

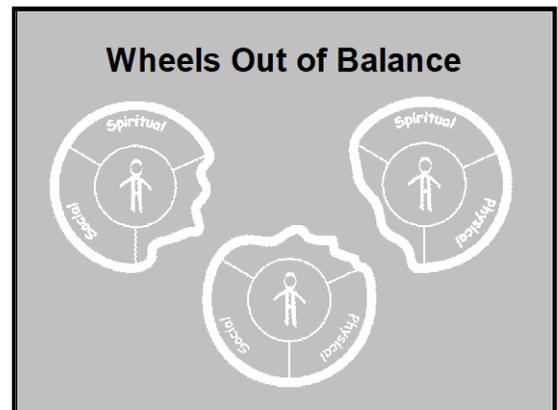


B. The balanced, complete wheel is moving toward something. What?



C. How does wisdom help us move toward God's intentions in all relationships – spiritual, physical, and social?

D. What happens to a wheel's movement when its rim is damaged or missing?



E. What is the effect on the wheel when one spoke is weak, broken or broken or missing?

IX. Key Ideas Reinforcement

X. Application

A. Personal Reflection

- How is your wheel (your life)? Is it balanced? How is the rim? Is the wheel moving forward?
- Which parts of your life and service need to be better developed and/or more balanced?

Wisdom Needs in My Life			
For each of the following areas, prayerfully identify one example of a way to grow in wisdom in one of the three relationships.			
3 Relationships	Physical	Spiritual	Social
My Life			

B. Action Plan

- Choose one specific step you can take to grow and become better developed and/or more balanced in your relationships.

Serving Others Action Plan and Commitment	
Choose one of the relationships, <u>circle it</u> and make a specific plan for one step you will take to grow (move toward God's intentions for them) in wisdom in <u>one</u> of your relationships.	
Physical	
Spiritual	
Social	

- Commit to do it.
- Share your plan with someone else and pray for each other.

THE WHEEL OF WISDOM

Narrative

What Is Wisdom?

We saw in Luke 2:52 that Jesus grew in wisdom, and we proposed that He is the best model for our own growth and development. Therefore, we should also grow in wisdom—but we first need to define it! It is not the same as intellectual growth or mental stability. In short, biblical wisdom is knowing and doing what God commands. Biblical wisdom is God’s instructions for living carried out in all areas of life.

The ancient Hebrew culture was known for its collections of wisdom sayings and literature, now available to us primarily in the biblical books of Proverbs and Psalms. Wisdom literature told the people how to please God and how to live well. When we please God, we live well. It was the custom of Jewish boys of Jesus’ era to memorize the wisdom sayings so they could grow in wisdom.

Jesus did so—and we should, also. Wisdom is to be sought after—like precious stones. When we walk in His ways and keep His commands, says the wisdom literature in our Bibles, it brings us life, prosperity, and blessing. Many of the wisdom sayings in Scripture show us how to grow in honesty, justice, diligence, self-control, righteousness, humility, community, and charity. Yes, we should seek to know and live according to this wisdom!

The source of all wisdom is God. He made us, and He knows how life works best. His wisdom should influence our actions, associations, interactions, and decisions. A compelling call for seeking wisdom can be seen in Proverbs 4:5-7:

Get wisdom, get understanding;
do not forget my words or swerve from them.
Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you;
love her, and she will watch over you.
Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom.
Though it cost all you have,
get understanding.

Although we might learn the wisdom of God through wise people or wise sayings, the Bible is the ultimate source of God’s wisdom for us today. It contains the instructions of God, and obeying them helps us to live well. The Bible is God’s revelation for how to live, for blessing and for our healing. Many products have operator’s manuals—instructions written by the products’ designers or manufacturers. The designers and manufacturers are best qualified to write the manuals. They know how their products were made and how they should be used to be all they were intended to be. God is our maker—our manufacturer. His written revelation, the Bible, is like an operator’s manual for us. Through Scripture, He tells us how He designed us to operate, or live, in every area of life.

Three Primary Relationships

Not only did God make us and all creation, but He put us into three primary relationships—with Himself, other people, and the rest of creation. At the Fall, these relationships were all broken (Gen. 3:12-19). We find the instructions, principles, and wisdom to heal our brokenness in the Bible. God revealed in this manual how our individual lives and our communities can be healed when broken—and how we can flourish. Why would we not want to live by our maker’s best wisdom?

Let us clarify a few points. We said that, at creation, God placed people in three primary relationships—spiritual, physical and social relationships. These sound very much like the areas of Jesus’ growth, don’t they? What do we mean by “primary”? These are “primary” relationships because all other relationships that God has given people are based on these three. They are the most fundamental of all of our relationships.

Let us clarify what we do and do not mean by “relationships.” It is something more than interaction, which is a common understanding of relationships. Usually, when we interact with other people, we say we are relating with them, socially. Usually, when we are aware of the presence of God, we say we are relating with Him, spiritually. Many people say they relate well with animals. Some people say they “commune with nature,” meaning they experience peace when surrounded by the quiet and beauty of nature. When talking about “relationships”, what we typically mean is our interaction with the social, spiritual, and physical world.

But interaction is not the full extent of what we mean about the three relationships God gave us at creation. The three primary relationships in which God placed us involve not only our ability to interact with other parts of God’s creation—but our roles and responsibilities and stewardship and authority and position regarding those other parts of God’s creation. God did not create the world and place us in it, like dolls in a toy universe. No, He gave us responsibility. He gave us roles. He gave us participation. He put us in “relationship” with His creation!

Here are some examples of what this means: *spiritual relationships* include our relationships with God and the spiritual world—with God the Father, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the church, and the rest of the spiritual world (angels, demons, Satan). In the spiritual area, one of our responsibilities is to abide in Christ. *Social relationships* include our relationships with each other—with our families, neighbors, friends, community, government, bosses, co-workers, and even our enemies. In this area a husband/father has stewardship responsibilities to love and care for his family. *Physical relationships* include our relationships with material creation—with our bodies, work, animals, earth, and time. In this area some of our responsibilities are to care for the cleanliness of our environment, or to work, to let the land rest after seven years of cultivation, and to rest on the 7th day, etc.

Yes, God gave us these three primary relationships, and He has also given us specific instructions for each of these relationships. These scriptural instructions are known as biblical wisdom. And knowing and applying Biblical wisdom in each of these relationships will move us toward God’s intentions for life—life as the designer intended it to be lived.

The Wheel of Wisdom

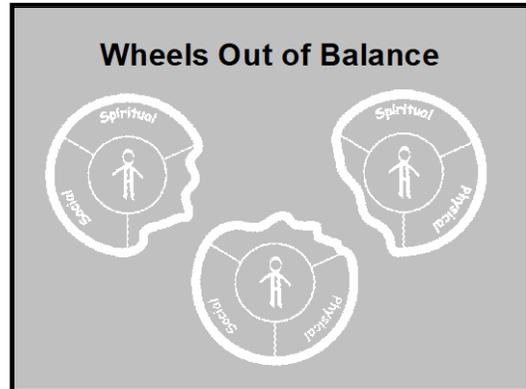
Let’s imagine a simple wheel to illustrate the three relationships and the role of wisdom in moving people toward God’s intentions and purposes. The rim of this wheel depicts wisdom. The hub, the center, represents our lives. The spokes are the three primary relationships¹. In our illustration, the wheel is preparing to move forward, toward God’s intentions for all of life. Now, picture a broken version of this wheel. Maybe the rim is bent or missing. Maybe one of the spokes is crooked or broken. In this broken condition, the wheel doesn’t move very well! Next, picture a good



¹ Some people discuss a fourth relationship—our relationship with ourselves. We omit it here because Scripture exhorts us to focus away from ourselves and because emotional maturity and personal balance are often by-products of obedience in our spiritual, physical, and social relationships.

version of this wheel. The rim is round. The hub is in the center. The spokes are even and balanced and complete. Which wheel would you rather use? Which would give you a better ride? Which wheel most closely represents your life?

A wheel is very hard to use if it lacks a rim, if it has missing or short or weak spokes, or if the hub is not in the centre. This is like an out-of-balance life. A wheel that is complete and in balance can serve the purpose for which it was made—it can move easily toward its objective. When in balance, our lives can move towards God’s intentions for us and those we serve. We need to live in the centre of God’s wisdom, moving toward His intentions in all three relationships.



Wisdom—the rim that holds it all together—is knowing and doing what God intends in the spiritual, physical, and social relationships of life. If we know and obey the wisdom of God—His instructions, intentions, and desires for our physical, spiritual, and social relationships—we experience balance and we move toward His intentions for our lives and service. If we help someone else grow in wisdom, we help them know and apply God’s instructions, moving toward God’s purposes in all areas of their lives. Wisdom is of incomparable value!

Wisdom recognizes that God made us and knows what we should do to live well. Blessing and balance in life come from living by God’s wisdom in all relationships. The Bible gives us a variety of instructions for each of these primary relationships. For example, in our spiritual relationships, it instructs us to pray with thanksgiving, hope in Christ, encourage one another in love and service, and meet regularly with other believers. In our relationships to the physical world, it instructs us to pray for the sick and stop gratifying sinful desires. In our social relationships, the Bible tells us how to live in harmony, be loving and humble, bless other people, lead productive lives, work to supply other’s needs, and win outsiders’ respect.

Let’s review. God placed people in three primary relationships—spiritual, physical, and social. God gave us instructions for each of these relationships. Found in Scripture, these instructions are known as “wisdom.” Growth in wisdom represents learning about and obeying God’s ways, instructions, intentions, commands, and desires for all of our physical, spiritual, and social relationships. As we obey God’s wisdom for these primary relationships, we grow in balance and move toward His intentions. We can move toward God’s intentions for our lives when all areas of our lives are guided by biblical wisdom.

Bob Moffitt taught the example of Jesus’ growth to a group of Brazilian missionaries in the 1990s. Two of the students were single women who ministered to a remote tribe of Saterei Indians, indigenous river people along the Amazon River. The literacy level was low, so they taught about Jesus’ growth in four areas, using stories and pictures. After teaching the Saterei, the missionaries asked the local people to choose one of the four areas in which they wanted to work. Leadership emerged. The river people caught the vision so clearly that they appointed four of their leaders and manage village life according to the four areas of Luke 2:52. The man selected to lead physical development was in charge of the village farm. Another leader was given responsibility for wisdom and started a preschool, an adult literacy class and classes in sewing. The leader for the spiritual area served as pastor of the local congregation, And the leader of the social area, was in charge of a brand new concept in the village – recreation. One of these leaders became a missionary himself, teaching this broader view of ministry to his tribesmen up and down

the river. Also to build wisdom, a woman was trained to be the community teacher. The community initiated a preschool, adult literacy class, and sewing classes.²

It is not enough to seek, learn, and know wisdom. Wisdom is to be obeyed. We must learn God's instructions—with the intentions of obeying them and moving toward His purpose for our lives and service. All areas of our lives need to be lived in the awareness that God has given us His loving revelation for life and that He observes us as we live. Wisdom is to be lived! The New Testament book of James substantiates what we have been seeing in the Old Testament about wisdom:

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. . . . 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. (James 3:13,17)

Wisdom is of great value. However, if we neglect God's instructions, we bring destruction and imbalance to our spiritual, physical, and social relationships. Deuteronomy 30:15-16 further explains the urgency of heeding God's instructions:

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

As leaders, we have a message to tell! We can inform, encourage, and equip other believers to develop wisdom and balance in each of these areas of relationship. As they learn and obey God's wisdom in their lives, they will move toward His intentions for their lives. In fact, if the goal of our service is to help people move toward God's intentions for them in all areas of their lives, then communicating the wisdom of God is imperative.

Wisdom and the Three Relationships

Since we have three relationships—and since Jesus is our model—we can plan service that touches each area. Consider an example of service that integrates all three relationships—and wisdom. If a church sponsors a football game between a church team and a community team, the intended result would be to make a primary impact in the social area. If the church serves water to the players, there is a secondary impact in the physical area. If the coach asks God to bless the game with both teams present, there is a secondary impact in the spiritual area. Finally, if he reviews the rules of the game and mentions ways that God wants us to follow His rules for the game of life, there is a secondary impact planned in the wisdom area. Together, the action taken models our relationships in each of the three areas—and wisdom.

We cannot grow toward the example of Christ without the wisdom of God. People should see it in our lives, experience it in our service, and hear it in our words. The Psalmist tells us that we can be wiser than our enemies because God's wisdom is with us. We can have more insight than our teachers because we meditate on His laws. And we can have more understanding than our elders because we obey His precepts (Psalm 119:97-100). Wisdom is not only for us! We can pray for and influence others to obey His wisdom. Those who obey Him live worthy, God-pleasing lives.

The creation God made was good, but sin entered the world, and all of the relationships God established for the human race were broken—spiritual, physical, and social. The evidence was everywhere! But God has a plan to restore everything that was broken. In His goodness, He has given us His wisdom to move

² Cited in *If Jesus Were Mayor*, page 243.

us—and those we serve—toward the restoration and healing He intends for the world He created and loves. May we seek, treasure, and obey it!

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Last edited by Nadia Chandler and Karla Tesch, August, 2007.
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Suggested Resources:

Miller, Darrow L. and Bob Moffitt. *On Earth As It Is in Heaven*. DVD: **Session ??**. Available through Disciple Nations Alliance: www.disciplenations.org/resources.

Disciple Nations Alliance online course: www.disciplenations.org/resources/course. Section: Wholistic Ministry

Harvest Foundation. *Leadership Develop Training Program (Need to get this from Karla and change name to LCMT) **Level Level ??***, pp.108 - 127. (Free download at www.harvestfoundation.org: Section: Material. Lesson is also called Three Relationships.

Moffitt, Bob, Tesch, Karla. *If Jesus Were Mayor: How Your Local Church Can Transform Your Community*. Oxford, UK: Monarch Books, 2006, pp. 53-55; 63 - **?**.