

# HOW TO BE SMART

## A STUDY OF PROVERBS



### Discussion Guide Week 1 “Wisdom and the Fear of God”

1. Is wisdom different from intelligence? In what way? Do you know people who are intelligent but who are not wise? Do you know wise people who are not particularly intelligent? What exactly is wisdom?

2. J. I. Packer in his well-respected book entitled *Knowing God* defines wisdom as follows:

Wisdom is the power to see, and the inclination to choose, the best and highest goal, together with the surest means of attaining it. (*Knowing God*, InterVarsity Press, 1973, p80).

Is this a good definition of wisdom? What is your personal “best and highest goal?” Discuss this definition in light of what you heard from Aaron in his first sermon on wisdom.

3. If you had to live life all over again and had but one wish, would you wish to be wise? Would that be your highest goal? Why or why not?
4. Is God wise? Consider the following Bible verses that speak to God’s wisdom: Job 9:4, Job 36:5, Daniel 2:20, Rom 16:25-27. Discuss the connection between God’s wisdom and your wisdom. See also Ephesians 5:15-17, Colossians 4:5-6.
5. The well-known actor Michael J Fox in his recent autobiography entitled: *Always Looking Up: The Adventures of an Incurable Optimist*, includes a chapter on his view of faith. In it he comments that many religious people he has come to know are motivated by “fear” of God and that fear of God’s retribution and punishment drives many to a religious lifestyle. From your experience, is this an accurate statement? Why or why not?
6. What does it mean to “fear” the Lord in the Bible? Does it mean the same as being scared of God? Is there a difference?
7. When Proverbs 1:7 says “fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and discipline,” what does that mean? How is fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom? Since those who say that there is no god are fools (Psalm 53:1), does that mean that belief in God is necessary to proper wisdom? How does “fear of the Lord” lead to discipline?
8. Where is the balance point for you in having an awe-filled respect of the holy, untouchable, omnipotent God of the universe on the one hand, and on the other calling him Abba Father (loosely translated as “Daddy”). See Exodus 19: 10-13 and Romans 8: 15-16. How can you simultaneously embrace both of these aspects of God’s character?

9. Read Ecclesiastes 5: 1-3. Consider and discuss some practical ways that you can increase your “respect” for God in the routines of your life. Is there a connection between fear or respect of God and personal humility? How do you demonstrate humility in your life?