

Perfect Practice

Develop Discernment and Skillful Living

Much to the glee of my daughter when she stumbles across my old photos, I was in karate as a boy. We spent hours in the dojo learning blocks, punches, and other techniques to protect ourselves in a fight. Our teacher used to remind us that it's not practice that makes perfect, but **perfect practice** that makes perfect. When a fight comes, as he would say, "you revert to your training." But skill-development and preparation aren't just foundational in martial arts — it's also core to our spiritual lives.

We're modeling our watchfulness after Jesus' watchfulness as we continue our [Cross Training](#) journey. Watchfulness comes when we're spiritually aware, living with readiness, resisting the devil, and full of wisdom. So, how do we develop the skills to tackle life's biggest obstacles?

What You Need to Know

The Hebrew word for "wisdom" is also translated as "skill" throughout Scripture. For example, as God directed the Tabernacle's construction, he gave specific craftspeople the skill (or wisdom) to do the intricate artistic work (Ex. 36:1). He filled people with the spirit of skill to make the priestly robes (Ex. 28:3), to design in metalwork, stone, wood, embroidery, and weaving (Ex. 35:30-35; 31:2-6), to spin the ornate fabric (Ex. 35:25-26), and to make all the hanging curtains (Ex. 36:8).

And Paul seems to draw on this passage in Ephesians, when he pairs wisdom with being filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:15-18). Only, instead of skillfully building God's house out of gold, wood, and linen, Christians — even us today — are led by the Lord to build his house with our lives (Eph. 2:20-22). We expertly mold and shape our hearts, minds, and relationships into the masterpieces God directs us to create.

Another great wisdom book in Scripture is Ecclesiastes. We learn to carefully consider life's seasons and how the present moment is best spent (Eccl. 3:1-8). And the preacher teaches us to live with joy, giving our all to each task we take on (Eccl. 3:12). Wisdom comes when we sharpen our skills, taking the time to improve ourselves (Eccl. 10:10).

What You Need to Do

Pursue wisdom as a way of life. In addition to fearing God (Prov. 9:10), Proverbs says, "*the beginning of wisdom is this: get wisdom*" (Prov. 4:7). We have to chase it, train for it, and care deeply about living wisely each day. Solomon became wise — not by osmosis or happenstance — but by asking God for wisdom (1 Kings 3:9-12). And we can obtain wisdom in the same way (James 1:5-6).

Let wisdom take root in your heart. Recalling the Bible's great wisdom book, we keep our "*heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life*" (Prov. 4:23). We're on the lookout for opportunities to improve ourselves, starting from the inside out (Matt. 12:35).

Wisdom takes practice, especially in your words. "*Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.*" Make sure your words are always "*gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person*" (Col. 4:5-6). You're not trying to force people to do what you want, but you are skillfully speaking in a persuasive and influential way (2 Cor. 5:11). Open your ears, engage your brain, and choose your words carefully (James 1:19; Prov. 17:27).

Through the Week

- **Read** — Mark 11:27-33; Luke 11:29-32; Prov. 1:20-33; 4:1-9; Eph. 5:6-21
- **Reflect** — Ask yourself, "*What areas of my life could use some sharpening?*"
- **Request** — Pray, "*Oh God, give your servant an understanding mind to discern between good and evil*" (cf. 1 Kings 3:9).
- **Respond** — Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 and identify your current season. What is it time for now?
- **Reach Out** — Ask someone, "*What have you learned when you've failed to make wise choices?*"