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### 3 STEPS TOWARDS DEVELOPING WISDOM

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James once asked, “Who is wise and understanding among you?” (*James 3:13*). He gives an immediate answer to his question, by saying a man is wise not because of who he is but because of what he does: “Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom” Yet the question remains, what kind of conduct will allow a man to be identified as wise? By searching through the Bible for the phrase, “is wise,” one can find three actions that will of necessity be found in the life of a man who is wise. By cultivating these actions, Christians today can find a way forward in developing wisdom in their lives.

**First**, a man is wise when he learns to hush: “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise” (*Proverbs 10:19*). It is often said, “It is better to let people think you are a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt.” Solomon’s statement is proof of the wisdom of such a saying – generally, the more a man says the more trouble he brings to himself and the more often he finds himself in sin. When one allows his voice to be silent, it opens him up to the wisdom of others – and certainly the wisdom of God. As long as a man speaks, he cannot hear.

**Second**, a man is wise when he learns to hearken: “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.” (*Proverbs 12:15*). Often the person who thinks he is right is the person who is the most outspoken about his belief – and the hardest person to sway from that belief. Unfortunately, most people generally either think they are right or live as though they are right (or claim as right a standard of living other than the one God prescribes). Solomon says that after a man refrains his lips, he must be willing to hear counsel – the only thing that will lead a man into wisdom. James says, “Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (*James 1:19*). It is not enough simply to hear though – Solomon emphasizes that man must hearken, a word translated from a Hebrew word that implies both hearing and obeying.

**Third**, a man is wise when he learns to help: “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he who wins souls is wise” (*Proverbs 11:30*). While there is a time to remain silent and a time to learn, Solomon is clear that there is also a time to teach. When wisdom has been uncovered by a person, that person would be foolish to keep it to himself – to keep it to himself would be to allow himself to remain in a world where foolishness exists and thereby make his life more difficult. To share wisdom will not only improve the life of the person with wisdom, it will improve the lives of those around him, as he will be to them as “a tree of life” that leads them to eternal life.

Who is wise? Clearly, the wise man is the man who is silent enough to listen and hears the counsel of God, and once he hears it is loud to proclaim it. A wise man continually questions himself: am I right in my eyes, or am I right in God’s eyes? When he discovers that he is right only in his eyes, he begins to listen; when he sees that he is right in God’s eyes, he imparts his wisdom to others. If Christians today wish to be wise, they would do well to hush first, and then to hearken and to help.