



September 2010
Equipped to value wisdom

Do you like jewellery? I do, and one of my favourite pieces is a ring I inherited from my father when he died. It's in the shape of a serpent and the eyes are two garnet stones. When compared to very expensive jewellery, this ring might not be worth all that much in monetary terms, but it's precious to me for sentimental reasons.

There are many things in life on which it's just not possible to place a value – at least, not in a financial sense. I would say my serpent ring comes into this category. If we were asked to make a list of those things we consider valuable, I wonder what would be on it. Perhaps we'd include our family and friends, our careers, our health, or the freedom of living in a democratic country. But I wonder how many of us would choose wisdom as a precious commodity? If, for example, we had to choose between wealth and wisdom, which would come out on top?

Many verses in the Old Testament book of Proverbs talk about wisdom and one in particular points out that it is far more valuable than rubies.¹ Is there any evidence for this? Yes! Wisdom is more valuable than rubies because:

- **Wisdom keeps good company.** Wisdom hangs out with good judgement, knowledge, and discernment.² How many times have you wanted to make the right decision in a difficult situation and longed to be able to cut through all the confusion surrounding what's going on? Without wisdom and its friends, it's unlikely we'll respond well to this kind of challenge.

¹ Proverbs 8:11

² Proverbs 8:12

- **Wisdom has beneficial effects.** The Bible tells us that one of these effects is **protection**.³ Over and over again we need to be protected from our own folly and also from the negative influences of some other people. Wisdom does this for us. Another benefit of possessing wisdom is **winning God's approval**.⁴ There's something deep within most of us that longs for approval, particularly from what psychologists call a "significant other", that is, someone in our lives who is vitally important to us. For followers of Jesus Christ, surely God is *the* "significant other" and to have his approval is beyond price! A third benefit of wisdom is its **life-giving** effect.⁵ Although not a universal cure-all, I'm sure there are many people who could testify to the fact that exercising wisdom in various situations has literally added years to their life.

- **Wisdom is a gift from God** and this in itself makes it valuable. God gives gifts to his children so they can use them to build up the church. I wonder how many times you've been grateful for the wisdom shown by a fellow Christian or perhaps you're the one who has been gifted in this way. Godly wisdom is not the same as natural wisdom and the New Testament book of James describes the wisdom that comes from heaven.⁶

- **Wisdom promotes happiness.**⁷ Want to be happy? Then get wisdom! Don't make finding happiness your goal – go for wisdom and understanding instead. Happiness comes as a by-product of these!

- **Wisdom is one of God's characteristics.**⁸ God wants his children to share the family likeness and having wisdom will bring us one step closer to that goal.

And if rubies don't do it for you, how about Proverbs 16:16? "How much better to get wisdom than gold, and understanding than silver!" (NLT)

³ Proverbs 2:12, 16

⁴ Proverbs 8:35

⁵ Proverbs 9:11

⁶ James 5:17

⁷ Proverbs 3:13

⁸ Romans 11:33