

# Profile of a Wise Man

## (According to the Book of Proverbs)

*by Bryan Gibson*

A wise man knows he doesn't know everything, so he takes advantage of every opportunity to increase in knowledge and wisdom (1:5; 2:1-5; 9:9; 10:8, 14; 18:15; 24:5-6), including what he can gain from the wisdom of others. He understands that "in the multitude of counselors, there is safety" (11:14).

A wise man doesn't trust his soul to what *seems* right; he wants to *know* what is right (16:25). Because he is not wise in his "own eyes," he is bent and determined to follow, not his own ways, but the ways of the Lord (3:5-7).

A wise man, because he so desperately wants to be right with God, actually loves those who rebuke him (9:8). What they say may hurt for a little while, but wisdom teaches him that "blows that hurt cleanse away evil" (20:30).

A wise man "restrains his lips", or "spares his words"; he doesn't say everything on his mind; he doesn't speak just to be heard, or to impress others (17:27; 29:11; 14:33; 10:19). When he does speak, he uses his tongue to teach (15:7), to rebuke (25:12), to encourage or help others (12:18), and to win souls (11:30). He is especially wise with his words when dealing with angry people—"a soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (15:1); "scoffers set a city aflame, but wise men turn away wrath" (29:8).

A wise man is alert to temptations—he "foresees evil and hides himself" (22:3); and he does not overestimate his ability to withstand temptation—he "fears and departs from evil" (14:16).

A wise man shows no partiality in his judgment of others (24:23-25), no matter how large or small the inducement may be—"to show partiality is not good, but for a piece of bread a man will do wrong" (28:21).

A wise man understands that riches "fly away like an eagle toward heaven", and so he does "not overwork to be rich" (23:4). He does not squander his money (21:20), but he is generous with it (11:25).

A wise man possesses other qualities closely related to wisdom, qualities which either lead to wisdom or become the byproducts of wisdom: humility (15:33), mercy (14:21), diligence (12:27), self-control (16:32), integrity (28:6), prudence (22:3), and a fear of the Lord (23:17-18).

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom..." (4:7). "My son, be wise and make my heart glad..." (27:11). "The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the legacy of fools" (3:35).