

**God is Our Direction**

**Part I**

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**INTRODUCTION:**

Have you even been in the place where you were asking yourself the question, "What direction should I go?" In your life right now, what direction are you headed? I am a boy scout. As a result of my scouting experience I learned early in life to be prepared, in fact the Boy Scout Motto is, "Be Prepared". If I'm going on a hike I like to go prepared so I don't get out in the middle of nowhere and have to ask myself the question, "What direction should I go?"

- I purchase or print maps of the area I will be in
- I make sure I have a compass
- I make sure I have my GPS and extra batteries
- I make sure I have water, food, rain gear, and a first aid kit in case of an emergency.

Many hikers hike without these precautions. To do hikes on trails that are easy to follow should not be a problem for most hikers. They may even be able to do some simple cross country hiking if they are familiar with the area and have landmarks to use to keep their bearings. There's nothing wrong with that as long as one is cautious. However conditions in the wilderness can change for many reasons. For example the change of the seasons can render the landscape unrecognizable. A fire can destroy the trail and landmarks so that they are no longer clear, and this can be very dangerous. A couple of years ago a woman left Marshals Gulch on top of Mt. Lemmon and began to hike on a trail that she had taken many times. However there had been a devastating fire on the mountain and after a couple of miles she became disoriented and got lost. She was lost for a week on the mountain but did survive. About 15 years ago a winter visitor went hiking out in Saguaro National Park East. Leaving from the picnic grounds at the south end of the park he started out on the trail. That evening he did not return to his car and was reported missing. A few days later they found his body. He had died of exposure. He was only a few hundred yards from the parking lot where his car was parked. There was a small rise in the landscape and he could not see his car. He had taken very little water with him and no food. Had either of these individuals taken the recommended precautions and been prepared they would have been able to find their way. A map and compass are not expensive but they are a very wise investment if you are going to go hiking. The Scout Motto says, "Be Prepared". It is wise to apply it when hiking and it is wise to apply it when hiking through this life. God has provided for you and I a GPS, a map, and a compass to follow through this life. Will we be cautious and prepared? Will we follow His simple guides? Don Francisco authored a song called flying by the seat of your pants. In this song he describes the individual that refuses to follow Christ and His Word as one, who is moving through this world, flying by the seat of their pants.

In this second sermon in our series, we are going to look at the guides God has given us to navigate through this life.

**God is our Direction:** Our text is found in...

**Ephesians 1:15-19 (NASB)**  
**[15] I...**

[16] do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers;

[17] that the **God** of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of **wisdom** and of **revelation** in the knowledge of Him.

[18] *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be **enlightened**, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

[19] and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe...

We want to look at three important words in this text; **wisdom**, **revelation**, and **enlightened**.

**Wisdom:** The emphasis of the word Wisdom is – Gift; the source of this wisdom is God, the Greek indicates that it is a gift **from** God.

**(CWS-NT) 4678.** σοφία **sophía**; gen. *sophías*, fem. noun from *sophós* (4680), wise. Wisdom, skill, tact, expertise in any art.

In the NT, it (**sophia**) refers to **wisdom**:

**(I)** Skill in the affairs of life, practical wisdom, wise management as shown in forming the best plans and selecting the best means, including the idea of sound judgment and good sense (Ac 6:3; 7:10; Col 1:28; 3:16; 4:5). *Stóma* (4750), mouth, and *sophían* in Lk 21:15 means wise utterance. See Sept: 1Ki 2:6. (We have been talking about talents and it is important to understand that talents are not the same thing as knowledge or skill. Knowledge can be learned and skill can be developed with practice. Talents on the other hand are a gift from God. Talents are how he made us, how He hard wired us. Our talents are how we do things naturally.)

**(II)** In a higher sense, **wisdom** (means), deep knowledge, natural and moral insight, learning, science, implying cultivation of mind and enlightened understanding. (When you study this use of the word **wisdom** you discover that it often implies something given by God. God is the source of this **wisdom**. It could be said that this is a talent, a gift from God, **wisdom** from God. It is how God created us; it is how He made us.)

**(C)** In respect to divine things, **wisdom**, knowledge, insight, deep understanding, represented everywhere as **a divine gift**, and including the idea of practical application. It is used metonymically for *gnōsis* (1108), knowledge or theoretical knowledge (**Mt 13:54** He came to His hometown and *began* teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where *did* this man *get* this **wisdom** and *these* miraculous powers? (The people in Jesus home town recognized that Jesus had some **wisdom** that had come from outside himself. They did not know that He was God incarnate and that this was divine **wisdom**. This was a **wisdom** that no teacher could have given Him.); **Mk 6:2** When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man *get* these things, and what is *this* **wisdom** given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands?; Ac 6:10 ); **divine knowledge** (**Ep 1:8** [7] In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace [8] which He lavished on us. In all **wisdom** and insight [9] He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him (This is from God, He is the **source** and in this **wisdom** He provides **direction** for us. God is directing us with this wisdom which makes God our **direction**)). **Sophía** stands for **divine wisdom**, the ability to regulate one's relationship with God, and is distinct from *phrónēsis* (5428), prudence, the ability to know and deal with people (1Co 12:8; Ep 1:17; **Col 1:9** [9] For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled (complete or completion) with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual **wisdom** and understanding, [10] so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; (Purpose directed by the **wisdom** of God in the talents He created in us. God is our **direction**. God is where we are going.) [11] strengthened

with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously [12] giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.; 2Pe 3:15). Specifically of **insight imparted from God** in respect to the **divine counsels** (**1Co 2:6,7** [5] so that your faith would not rest on the **wisdom** of men, but on the power of God. [6] Yet we do speak **wisdom** among those who are mature; a **wisdom**, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; [7] but we speak God's **wisdom** in a mystery, the hidden **wisdom** which God predestined before the ages to our glory; [8] *the **wisdom** which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; [9] but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND *which* HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.""). Metonymically of **the author and source of this wisdom** (1Co 1:30). **As conjoined with purity of heart and life** (**Jas 1:5** But if any of you lacks **wisdom**, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach (Did you ever know someone who lacked wisdom? It isn't because they did not have wisdom, they just did not know what God had given them and they did not develop and strengthen it to use in His Kingdom.), and **it** will be given to him.; **3:13,15,17** [13] Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of **wisdom**. [14] But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and *so* lie against the truth. [15] This **wisdom** is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. [16] For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. (In verses 13-15 James talks about the wisdom of man or of the world. The wisdom of the world is wisdom that has set God aside. It is wisdom that ignores God and the wisdom He gives to all men.) [17] But the **wisdom** from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. [18] And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.). See Lk 2:40,52.*

**Revelation:** The emphasis of the word Revelation is – Discovering; It is the unfolding of the deep things of God. This year we are going to discover the wisdom of God in a new and exciting way.

**602.** ἀποκάλυψις **apokálypsis**; gen. *apokalúptōs*, fem. noun from *apokalúptō* (601), to reveal. Revelation, uncovering, unveiling, disclosure. One of three words referring to the Second Coming of Christ (1Co 1:7; 2Th 1:7; 1Pe 1:7,13). The other two words are *epipháneia* (2015), appearing (1Ti 6:14), and *parousía* (3952), coming, presence (2Th 2:1). *Apokálypsis*, a grander and more comprehensive word, includes not merely the thing shown and seen but the interpretation, the unveiling of the same. The *epipháneiai* (pl.), appearances, are contained in the *apokálypsis*, revelation, being separate points or moments therein. Christ's first coming was an *epipháneia* (2Ti 1:10); the second, an *apokálypsis*, will be far more glorious.

**(I)** Spoken of the removal of ignorance and darkness by the communication of light and knowledge, illumination, instruction (Lk 2:32; Sept.: Isa 42:6).

**(II)** In the sense of revelation, disclosure, manifestation of that which becomes evident by the event. In Ro 2:5, "the day of manifestation of God's wrath" (a.t.), i.e., when it will be manifested; 8:19, "the manifestation of the sons of God," means the revelation of the glory (Ro 8:18,21) which they will experience. The true worth of the believers as they experience suffering is not made manifest now, but it will be when the Lord comes again and the glory of each believer will be proportionate to his suffering and sacrifice for Christ. **The revelation of the mysteries refers to divine purposes and doctrines which before were unknown and concealed** (Ro 16:25 [TR]; 1Co 14:6,26). Of revelations from God the Father or Christ (2Co 12:1,7; Ga 1:12; 2:2; Ep 3:3). **In Ep 1:17 "a spirit of .**

. . revelation" means a spirit which can fathom and unfold the deep things of God. Spoken of future events (Rev 1:1), where it forms part of the title of the book.

**Syn.:** *gumnótēs* (1132), nakedness; *phanérōsis* (5321), manifestation; *éleusis* (1660), coming (Ac 7:32).

(the opposite of this revelation is) **Ant.:** *peribólaiōn* (4018), something that covers around, a veil; (Often it is self that is the veil that covers the truth of Christ and His Eternal Kingdom.) *sképasma* (4629), a covering, roofing; *stégē* (4721), roof, covering; *éndusis* (1745), putting on; *kálumma* (2571), a cover, veil.

**Enlightened:** The emphasis of the word Enlightened is – Realization; to bring to light, this makes it possible to use this wisdom.

**5461.** φωτίζω *phōtízō*; fut. *phōtísō*, related to *phōs* (5457), light. To give light to (Lk 11:36; Rev 18:1; [cf. Rev 21:23; 22:5; Sept.: Isa 60:19]), to enlighten, shine light upon (Jn 1:9; Ep 1:18; Heb 6:4; 10:32; Sept.: Ps 119:130); to illuminate, make one see or understand (Ep 3:9; Sept.: Jdg 13:8; 2Ki 12:2; 17:27); to bring to light, make known (1Co 4:5; 2Ti 1:10). ( )

**Deriv.:** *phōtismós* (5462), a shining, illumination;

**Syn.:** *anáptō* (381), to enkindle, light; *diaugázō* (1306), to glimmer through, dawn; *exēgéō* (1834), to explain; *hermē-neúō* (2059), to interpret; *diermēneúō* (1329), to explain thoroughly, expound; *phanerōō* (5319), to make apparent, show, manifest, declare; *diasaphéō* (1285), to clear thoroughly, declare; *plērophoréō* (4135), to inform fully, completely assure; *apoka-lúptō* (601), to take off the cover, disclose, reveal; *dēlōō* (1213), to show, declare; *dialaléō* (1255), to declare publicly; *diaphēmizō* (1310), to report thoroughly, spread abroad.

(The opposite of enlighten is) **Ant.:** *diastrephō* (1294), to distort, misinterpret; *skotízō* (4654), to obscure, darken; *episkiázō* (1982), to overshadow, cast a shade upon. (Sometimes members of the church do a good job of this by their negative attitudes toward revelation and changes that are needed in the church.)

I think Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, wanted them to understand that God had created them with gifts of talents that could be used in the Kingdom of God. Wisdom, Revelation, Enlightenment; these are the words Paul used and they are a key in helping us to discover what God created us to be as a unique individual in the Body of Christ. (1Co 2:6,7 [5] so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. [6] Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; [7] but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory)

We are trying to learn how we can be more effective in being a part of the Body of Christ this year. Certainly understanding the Word of God is our top priority. It is also important to learn the direction in which God's word points us. I have been talking about how God created each of us with a unique combination of talents that help us to carry out the function He has for us as a part of His Body here on earth. There is a new term that you will be hearing as we talk about this. It is the simple phrase Strengths-Based. I believe this is found in the scriptures, in fact in the very scriptures we looked at today. It is simple to understand.

We have learned the importance of three words this morning, words found in our text. **Eph 1:17-18 – [17]** that the **God** (the source) of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give (a gift) to you a spirit of **wisdom** and of **revelation** in the knowledge of Him. (the discovery)

[18] *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be **enlightened**, (the realization) so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,*

- **Wisdom:** Emphasis – Gift; this is a gift from God
- **Revelation:** Emphasis – Discovering; the unfolding of the deep things of God
- **Enlightened:** Emphasis – Realization; to bring to light, this makes it possible to use this wisdom in our daily lives

**Strengths-Based:** It has to do with discovering who God created you to be and using who you are to accomplish His will for your life and function in the Kingdom of God. It involves three steps:

1. Discovering your talents
2. Developing your talents into strengths
3. Deploying you strengths to accomplish your function in the Body of Christ

**Strengths-Based Theology:** If we add the word theology to our new term we get the phrase – Strengths-Based Theology. When you add the word theology to the phrase you are talking about the study of how the strengths-based concept fits into the study of God. The word of God has always talked about how the wisdom of God is superior to the wisdom of man. Again, we read that in our scriptures earlier. (**Jas 1:5** But if any of you lacks **wisdom**, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and **it** will be given to him.; **3:13,15,17** [13] Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of **wisdom**. [14] But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and *so* lie against the truth. [15] This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. [16] For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. [17] But the **wisdom** from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. [18] And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.)

**Conventional Wisdom versus The Wisdom of God:** To do what you were created to do you must defy the conventional wisdom of the world. The world says...

1. The best in the world have the same talents. (Not so says Gallup surveys)
2. Talents can be learned. (Not so says Gallup surveys. They can be improved or strengthened but not learned.)
3. Weakness fixing leads to excellence. (Not so says Gallup surveys.)

So that brings us to ask a question: What is most important to know; your strengths or weaknesses? Conventional wisdom and the wisdom of God stand in opposition.

Conventional Wisdom:

- The world wants to know their weaknesses so they can fix them.
- Schools focus on improving bad grades. *Now it is important to teach all subjects but we should not expect that every student will perform in a similar way in each area of study. (Let me give you a personal example of how each school I attended tried to fix a weakness I had in reading.)*
  - To go from 5<sup>th</sup> grade to 6<sup>th</sup> grade I had to go to summer school for remedial reading and spelling
  - To go from 8<sup>th</sup> grade to high school I had to take a speed reading class my first semester of high school
  - After my sophomore year in high school I transferred to another high school and they required me to take a remedial reading class during my first semester there.

- To enroll in my first semester of college I had to take speed reading. "After all" the counselor said, "you want to be able to read faster don't you?"
- After my military service I went back to college so I could fulfill God's call in my life to be a preacher. Guess what they required me to take my first semester at SNU? Yes, speed reading.  
(They never fixed the problem because I had a weakness they did not know about or understand in those days. It's called dyslexia.)
- Work evaluations focus on fixing areas an employee is weak in. How much better would it be to focus on the strengths of an employee? Companies that have done this have greatly improved the performance of their employees and the overall performance of the company.

#### The Wisdom of God:

- We have the greatest room for improvement in areas of our strengths and talents. (Because talents are hard wired in us by God. Focusing on, and improving the person God made us to be makes more sense that focusing on and trying to improve our weaknesses.)
- Talent is potential created into us by God.
- Strength is developed talent.
- **Strength** – The ability to consistently provide near-perfect performance in a specific task. (Don't let the term "near-perfect" scare you. After all we are working with the backing of Almighty God and the influence of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives.)
- Strength is a combination of three things:
  1. Talent – talent is the foundation, the God given ability or potential we have been created with, it is a gift from God.
  2. Skill comes from experience. It is the ability to perform the basic steps of a task or function.
  3. Knowledge comes from learning through study and research.
- **Talents** – naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied. (Talent is a God given ability, it is natural, it is a gift.)

Would it not be wonderful if there was a tool we could use that would help us discover our talents so we could develop them into strengths? Gallup Strengths Finder is such a tool. And with the help of the Holy Spirit we will be using it this year to help us discover, develop, and deploy our talents to accomplish our functions in the Body of Christ. Our Mission: Investing In Eternity. God is our **Direction**. Next week we will look at our mission statement in more detail for it is the direction we travel together.

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(**dgb** Comments in parenthesis are personal comments that I make concerning quotes or information from other sources.)