

### The Point is to Get Understanding (Proverbs 1:5-6)

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*A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a **man of understanding** will acquire wise counsel (Proverbs 1:5).*

- Solomon would say our public education system does not cause an **increase in learning**, it just broadens a student's knowledge and technical abilities. For Solomon, a broader education would not be a higher education. He would say a higher education could only be based on a platform of godly wisdom, and only through wisdom could learning increase. Otherwise, we are just learning things which might or might not be true, and with no discernment to know the difference.
- **For example**, a friend of mine recently came back from a weekend with a man I believe to be a false teacher. He said: "I learned a lot from that guy." I said: "I'm sure you did, but most of it wasn't true." **Just because we are learning does not mean our knowledge of the truth is increasing.** We could learn volumes about Buddhism or Hinduism, but most of it would not be true. An **increase in learning** is only possible in the context of having the wisdom to discern truth from nonsense.

*To understand a proverb and a figure, The words of the wise and their riddles (Proverbs 1:6).*

- Verse 6 brings up a very interesting question connected to wisdom. It's also mentioned in verse 2. The question is: "Why does Solomon want us to be able to *discern ... sayings and understand ... riddles*?" Why not just say it plainly? Why should we have to figure out a *figure*? The answer, it seems, is because riddles, figures, parables, proverbs, and other poetic expressions force us to **understand**, not just memorize and imitate. When I figure out someone's riddle, I learn how he thinks. Riddles help us bridge the gap from knowledge to wisdom, in that they teach us how to trace the author's thoughts.
- Understanding poetic expression requires ingenuity, which in turn requires imagination, which is creative image making. But it is not the creative thinking we might do while observing abstract art, which has no message of its own but asks us to conjure up our own conclusions. Biblical poetry requires a creativity that takes us from the rut of our own thought patterns to those of the author of the poetic expression. The understanding of biblical poetry requires the use of our imagination in a certain way (the author's way), not in any way.
- **For example**, the parables of Jesus were often given in such a way that, in order for the Pharisees to understand them, they would have to abandon their legalistic rabbinical way of thinking. They had to change not just their conclusions (for example, about the specifics of Sabbath keeping), but they had to think about their whole relationship with God in a different way. In order to understand Christ's parables about "the Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:25-32) and "the Prodigal Son" (Luke 15:11-32), the Pharisees had to change their concept of what it meant to be a good neighbor.