

POWER HOUR

9/20/2026

Lesson Text:
Proverbs 30:1-14

Related Scriptures:
Ecclesiastes 3:9-14; Job 37-39;
Psalms 12:1-8; 14:1-7;
Mark 10:17-31

“HUMBLE WISDOM INSTRUCTS
PRIDEFUL FOLLY”

NLT TRANSLATION

Golden Text: I have not mastered human wisdom, nor do I know the Holy One.

Proverbs 30:3 NLT

Time: Unknown

Place: Judah

Proverbs 30:1-14 NLT

¹ The sayings of Agur son of Jakeh contain this message. I am weary, O God; I am weary and worn out, O God. ² I am too stupid to be human, and I lack common sense. ³ I have not mastered human wisdom, nor do I know the Holy One. ⁴ Who but God goes up to heaven and comes back down? Who holds the wind in his fists? Who wraps up the oceans in his cloak? Who has created the whole wide world? What is his name—and his son's name? Tell me if you know!

⁵ Every word of God proves true. He is a shield to all who come to him for protection. ⁶ Do not add to his words, or he may rebuke you and expose you as a liar. ⁷ O God, I beg two favors from you; let me have them before I die. ⁸ First, help me never to tell a lie. Second, give me neither poverty nor riches! Give me just enough to satisfy my needs. ⁹ For if I grow rich, I may deny you and say, “Who is the Lord?” And if I am too poor, I may steal and thus insult God's holy name. ¹⁰ Never slander a worker to the employer, or the person will curse you, and you will pay for it. ¹¹ Some people curse their father and do not thank their mother. ¹² They are pure in their own eyes, but they are filthy and unwashed. ¹³ They look proudly around, casting disdainful glances. ¹⁴ They have teeth like swords and fangs like knives. They devour the poor from the earth and the needy from among humanity.

INTRODUCTION

In this lesson, we turn in an unexpected direction: a humble man who declared himself stupid yet had true wisdom. Agur is a figure shrouded in mystery. Yet his words in Proverbs reveal his humility and profound insight and gives direction on how to live. Indeed, his prayer underscores his radical desire to pursue holiness and his willingness to sacrifice to attain it. When studying this passage in which Agur declared that he lacked understanding, ask yourself why such an obviously intelligent man, Agur, made such a self-deprecating declaration. Consider also whether you might say the same thing! Thinking on these questions will help point you in the direction of true wisdom.

Additional Scripture Readings

Who Gathered the Wind? Job 37:1-13.

Who Bound the Waters. Job 38:1-11.

The Breathtaking Power of God. Job 38:22-41.

Who May Contend with God? Job 39:26-40:2.

The Rich Young Man. Mark 10:17-31.

The Fool. Psalms 14:1-7.

The Words of Agur. Proverbs 30:1-14.

1. God's wisdom not dependent on human expertise (Proverbs 30:1-2)

Proverbs 30:1 introduces Agur, son of Jakeh. He is mentioned only here in Scripture. Many scholars do not believe Agur was of Jewish descent. The original readers must have known of him, or else his words would have had little effect. People do not generally take advice from an unknown person. Some scholars believe Solomon used a pen name. However, it is unlikely that Solomon, known for his wisdom, would use a pseudonym. His real name would have carried more weight. Although we do not know who Agur was, that does not diminish his reputation to the original readers. The fact that Agur may not have been a Jewish writer emphasizes that God is concerned for all people. Godly wisdom is available to all who seek and call on God. Two other men are mentioned in this passage: Ithiel and Ucal. Who they were is also not known. Godly wisdom is not dependent on the reputation of people but on God's eternal Word. Agur's words in this passage

are described as a prophecy. Whoever Agur was, he was speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Proverbs 30:2 states that Agur considered himself to be the most brutish of all people. To be brutish is to be like a beast and lack intelligence. Agur was describing himself as nothing more than a beast. Why would Agur say this? Perhaps Agur's humble wisdom is displayed by his self-deprecation, for it draws a significant contrast to those who profess to be wise but are not. People of Agur's day believed him to be wise, while Agur humbly deemed himself to be brutish when compared to the wisdom of God.

2. God's wisdom compared to human wisdom (Proverbs 30:3-4) Human wisdom is learned through observation and experience. Trial and error (or trial and success) is one key way wisdom is generally acquired. A wise person learns from mistakes and successes. God's wisdom, however, is revealed by God Himself. God's wisdom is demonstrated by a series of questions that only God can answer. Who knows the path between heaven and earth? Who controls the winds and the waves? Who set the parameters of the earth? Who knows the name of the One who controls all things? These questions are reminiscent of the conversation God had with Job. Whereas Job initially thought he understood God and His dealings with mankind but repented when He encountered God and understood his own limitations, Agur began with his ignorance. Recognizing that you know little is better than thinking you know something when you do not. True wisdom understands and admits one's lack of knowledge and seeks God's insight. The questions that Agur listed are unanswerable for those who have only human knowledge and wisdom. The mystery of Creation and the identity of God and His Son are revealed by wisdom and knowledge that come only from above. This wisdom is far superior to mere human understanding. Only wisdom from God can lead to a proper relationship with one's Creator. Agur asked a series of rhetorical questions, one of which was, Who knows the Lord's name and His son's name? Agur's language is probably not directly Trinitarian. He is likely imputing the imagery of an ancient Near Eastern monarch who passes on his wisdom to his heir. While the Old Testament pointed forward to the coming of Christ (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 24:25-27), the prophets did not have a complete picture of what Christ would be like but saw the promises as from a distance (Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 1:10-12).

3. God's word, the source of wisdom (Proverbs 30:5-6)

God's Word is totally pure. Human wisdom is based on the unstable foundation of our understanding and ability. God's wisdom is revealed in the Word of God that has been tested and proven repeatedly since Creation. God never fails. Trusting in God's wisdom (and therefore His Word) results in safety. God is a shield to those who trust Him. To disregard God's Word or to privilege human reasoning above God's Word results in judgment.

4. Agur's prayer to God (Proverbs 30:7-9) Proverbs 30:7-9 records the only prayer found in Proverbs, though it should be noted that other passages talk about prayer (Proverbs 15:29). Wisdom is known by her children, as Jesus said (Luke 7:35), and a wise person avails himself or herself of the power of prayer. Some (but not all) scholars think the prayer of Agur assumes that he was nearing death. They believe Agur was an old man and was preparing his soul to meet the ultimate fate of all humanity. Some interpreters suggest that the words "Ithiel" and "Ucal" are not proper names but terms Agur used to describe himself as weary and worn, likely reflecting the condition of an old man (Proverbs 30:1). Regardless, wisdom was not often ascribed to young men in Agur's ancient culture. It was sometimes assumed that the elderly attain wisdom, not the young. Agur's prayer consists of two parts. Part one was a plea to know the truth and not be fooled by lies. A prayer like this should accompany one's whole life, not just old age. Age alone will not produce wisdom if one has not sought wisdom from God. Contrary to our expectations, sometimes the young may be wiser than the old (Psalms 119:99).

Part two of Agur's prayer was a desire to be satisfied with a life of balance and moderation. Wealth may lead to a sense of self-sufficiency and a lack of dependence on God. Poverty may result in actions that go against God's law and bring reproach to the name of God. A wise person values God's honor above riches. Jesus instructed His followers to pray for daily bread. While riches are not inherently sinful (Genesis 13:2), they are a serious temptation and a danger for many (Matthew 19:24). To make this request with Agur would likely be good for many of us! A wise person understands every day's provision to be a gift of God. Wisdom also recognizes God's provision to be sufficient. God's love is new every morning.

5. God's response to Agur's prayer (Proverbs 30:10-14) Verses 10 through 14

contain admonitions that Agur offered for proper behavior. Perhaps these verses represent God's answer to Agur's prayer. Agur asked, and God responded. Agur's admonition not to accuse a servant to his master deals with slander. Slander will not be taken lightly when God evaluates one's actions. The seemingly insignificant person has a Master who is concerned for the poor. Godly wisdom recognizes that all people are created in the image of God and are worthy of respect. How one treats those who are supposedly inferior is a window into one's understanding. Verses 11 through 14 all begin with "There is a generation." This generation consists of those who ignore God's wisdom. This generation disregards parents, which is a grievous sin (Leviticus 20:9). How often do people today blame all their flaws on their parents? Although we can acknowledge the sins of our parents, to blame them for everything wrong with us is akin to cursing them. People of the sinful generation considers themselves sinless, which is a delusion. They are proud and arrogant. Pride inevitably leads to failure because it refuses to repent or make necessary changes. Finally, they are vicious oppressors of the poor. This is a serious offense because the Lord holds the poor in high esteem. Who was that generation? It is every generation that rejects the wisdom that comes from God—our present generation included. The generation is reminiscent of Paul's description in Romans 1:28-32, and includes all who profess themselves to be wise but are fools in God's eyes.

PRACTICAL POINTS

Even the most ignorant of people can gain wisdom if they have humility (Proverbs 30:1-3).

Humanity's knowledge will never equal God's knowledge (vs. 4).

Seek the wisdom of God's pure Word, and He will take care of you (vss. 5-6).

Pursue truth and trust God for your daily needs to have a satisfying life (vss. 7-9).

Treat all people properly, regardless of their station in life (vs. 10).

Honor your parents (vs. 11).

Perform an accurate self-evaluation of your life, and repent of wickedness (vs. 12).

Arrogance is abhorrent to God and people (vs. 13).

The poor are often the target of exploitation, but they are precious to God (vs. 14).

CONCLUSION

Wisdom and foolishness each have a companion. The companion of wisdom is humility, and the companion of foolishness is pride. Humility is both the source of and the result of wisdom. Similarly, pride is both the source of and the result of foolishness.

Next week, let's study in *Proverbs 14:1-19 'There is a Way That Seems Right'* to help us see more contrast between the way of the wise and the way of the foolish.

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