

THE
TRUTH
IN
TRUE
CRIME

WHAT INVESTIGATING DEATH
TEACHES US ABOUT THE
MEANING OF LIFE

J. WARNER WALLACE

 **ZONDERVAN**
REFLECTIVE

ZONDERVAN REFLECTIVE

The Truth in True Crime

Copyright © 2024 by J. Warner Wallace

Published in Grand Rapids, Michigan, by Zondervan. Zondervan is a registered trademark of HarperCollins Christian Publishing, Inc.

Requests for information should be addressed to customer care@harpercollins.com.

ISBN 978-0-310-11137-5 (softcover)

ISBN 978-0-310-11141-2 (audio)

ISBN 978-0-310-11138-2 (ebook)

Scripture quotations marked ASV are taken from the American Standard Version. Public domain.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are taken from the ESV[®] Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version[®]). Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version[®], NIV[®]. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.[®] Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.Zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.[®]

Scripture quotations marked NASB taken from the (NASB[®]) New American Standard Bible[®], Copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved. www.lockman.org.

Scripture quotations marked NRSV are taken from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Any internet addresses (websites, blogs, etc.) and telephone numbers in this book are offered as a resource. They are not intended in any way to be or imply an endorsement by Zondervan, nor does Zondervan vouch for the content of these sites and numbers for the life of this book.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Published in association with the literary agency of Mark Sweeney & Associates, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

Cover design: Darren Welch Design

Cover photo: © Denis Tangney Jr. / Getty Images

Interior design: Kait Lamphere

Illustrated by J. Warner Wallace

Printed in the United States of America

\$PrintCode

FOREWORD

My childhood neighbor was a smoker. My big sister and I went over to her house one afternoon, and I was desperate to impress her teenage daughter Tara, who I thought was the absolute coolest. I caught a glimpse of the amber-colored glass ashtray out of the corner of my eye and had the brilliant idea to pick a cigarette butt out of the soot and hold it to my lips. Just as I had fully embodied the elegant style of Audrey Hepburn with her long cigarette holder, my sister gasped and exclaimed, “Oooh, you are gonna be in so much trouble! I’m telling Mom.” At this point, my sister and Tara ran out of the room, presumably to race next door and end my life as I knew it. I was left alone in my neighbor’s bedroom with nothing but my pigtails, Spider-Man jeans, and crushing guilt. So I did what any sane seven-year-old would do and quickly dashed under the bed.

I must have fallen asleep because before I knew it, the sun had gone down and I overheard the muffled voice of my mom frantically talking with my neighbor. Then I heard them call the police. “Oh my goodness,” I thought. “Now I’ve done it. I am definitely going to jail for this!” So I burrowed in and hid even longer until I worked up the courage to face the music. I finally came out from under the bed and turned myself in. To my surprise, the police officers were not mad at me. They didn’t cuff me, drive me downtown, and book me for underage pretend tobacco use. My story did not turn into a true crime documentary on Netflix. Instead, the officers smiled warmly and took me outside to where my mom was surrounded by neighbors, police cars, blinking lights, and the chopping noise of a helicopter flying overhead. Of course, I could have saved the police the paperwork and trip out to my house and saved my mom the trauma of thinking her child had been kidnapped for several hours, had I known one thing. Truth. That’s it. If I had known the truth of the situation, it all would have been resolved quickly, with almost no fuss. The truth is, there are no laws against fake smoking. Plus, my sister and Tara probably just ran over to my house, forgot about the whole thing, and started doing something else. Truth changes everything.

Truth is liberating. In the case of my smoking debacle, the truth set me free! I was not in trouble. However, it may seem counterintuitive to think of truth as beneficial when the truth is heartbreaking, such as a grim diagnosis or a life-altering phone call. Yet truth always provides a way of direction and healing. We often cannot appreciate good news until we know the bad news. A cancer patient will not be thankful for the benefits of chemotherapy, and be willing to endure its side effects, until he knows the truth about the diagnosis. Nor can we turn toward God until we know about our true fallen spiritual condition. Sadly, in our present world the truth is exchanged for happy falsehoods within the millions of self-help books that confidently advise you on how to live your life. They counsel you to trust your gut, follow your heart, and put yourself first. However, the truth is that you can dig into your own heart as deep as you want, but you will always find the sinner waiting for you there.

J. Warner Wallace, a Los Angeles homicide detective renowned for the cold cases he's broken, is uniquely qualified to talk about the worst of the human condition. Wallace also knows how humans flourish when they embrace biblical truth. If I could sum up *The Truth in True Crime* into one word, it would be in the word *wisdom*, which is truth applied to life.

Wisdom is what J. Warner Wallace is known for. You may know him as the homicide detective Keith Morrison referred to as “the evidence whisperer” on *Dateline* NBC. Or you may know him as the former atheist who put the evidence for Christianity to the test and found it to be true. He is both those things. But for those who know him as a brother in Christ, Jim (J. Warner) is the one we go to when we have a major life decision to make. He always has thoughtful advice that is built on hard-won wisdom, common sense, and truth. That is why I am so thrilled he has written this book. In it, he recounts true crime stories from his real-life experience and provides readers with applicable life-changing truths. He demonstrates the superior wisdom of biblical principles, which is surprisingly supported by secular research. Want to know how to live a life that is fruitful, filled with joy, and aligned with truth? Want to glean from the wise advice Jim (J. Warner) has offered so many friends and loved ones? Read the words of this book. I did, and I walked away encouraged. And I think you will too. Truth is hard, but as Jesus promised, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Alisa Childers, author of *The Deconstruction of Christianity*
and host of *The Alisa Childers Podcast*

PREFACE

Chasing Leads

Rick's dress shoes were getting wet as the snow fell with increasing intensity. I could read the expression on his face: *this better be the one*.

We were standing on a porch—the twenty-seventh in a long series of porches—waiting for a redhead to open the door. It was a bitterly cold December day, less than a mile from Temple Square in Salt Lake City.

Thirty-eight years earlier, Cathy Jacobsen had been stabbed to death in her bedroom, two states west of Utah. She was a junior in high school at the time and innocent enough to allow the killer into her home while her parents were at work.

He stabbed Cathy with a knitting needle she had been using to make a scarf for her mother's Christmas gift. The killer then left Cathy on the floor of her bedroom next to the scarf, a baseball cap, and several unwrapped gifts.

He must have panicked. Perhaps Cathy screamed, although no one in the neighborhood reported hearing her. In any case, the killer inadvertently left an important clue: his cap.

The original detectives recovered a single red hair from that baseball cap, but there was no DNA technology at the time to help identify the suspect. When we reopened the case nearly four decades later, the technology was sufficient to retrieve a partial DNA marker from the hair. Not enough to identify the murderer, but enough to match a redhead from whom we might obtain a larger sample.

And thus began our long porch-to-porch journey across America. You might not think a seventeen-year-old girl would know many redheads, but in this case you would be wrong. We identified thirty-four redheaded associates, friends, and relatives.

I turned on my small audio recorder, tucked it in my outer pocket, and knocked.

A man with red hair opened the door, and Rick presented him with a

business card. I began my well-rehearsed introduction: “Hello, Mr. Carson, my name is Detective Wallace, and we are investigating the murder of Cathy Jacobsen.”

“Oh my . . . yes, we were friends many years ago. What a nightmare. It was so shocking.”

“Well, we were fortunate enough to obtain the killer’s DNA from the crime scene, and we’ve been visiting her friends and family members to eliminate them as suspects.” My opening statement was intentionally diagnostic. Who would refuse the opportunity to be eliminated as a killer? Rick and I knew the murderer would likely hesitate at such a request, so we carefully evaluated Mr. Carson’s response.

“Of course, I’m happy to give a sample. Anything I can do to help. I’ve always hoped the police would eventually solve this murder.” Rick and I exchanged knowing expressions. We’d seen this enthusiasm before. *Twenty-six times* before. We swabbed Carson, only to later find he, like the prior twenty-six candidates, failed to match the DNA profile from the cap.

We continued to chase leads for three more months, eventually locating, swabbing, and eliminating all thirty-four redheaded suspects. Eighteen months into our investigation, we realized we were no closer to solving the case. The murder of Cathy Jacobsen remains one of my open, unsolved mysteries.

While our inability to solve the Jacobsen case seemed an abject failure at the time, we later came to see it as much more. From murder cases like this one, we discovered a lot about people—and about ourselves—even when the cases remained unsolved. We learned a lot about life from investigating death, a lot about the nature of people from investigating victims and suspects.

Maybe that’s why “true crime” stories are more popular than ever before, dominating fiction bookshelves, podcast queues, and streaming platforms. True *crime* reveals our true *nature*, and everyone enjoys plumbing the depths of humanity’s deepest truths (and darkest secrets). Homicide investigations reveal more than the identity of the killer. They also reveal what’s important to us, what threatens our well-being, and what causes us to flourish. Every murder investigation teaches two lessons: a *death* lesson and a *life* lesson. Some of the lessons Rick and I learned were cautionary tales. Others, guiding principles.

All, however, happened to confirm the truth of the Christian worldview.

I initially found this surprising. I wasn't a Christian when I started my career as a detective. But along the way, I began investigating the case for God's existence, the reliability of the Gospels, the resurrection of Jesus, and the divine impact of Jesus on human culture. I've written about my discoveries in other books. This book is different. It contains truths about *life* gleaned from investigations about *death*. It also includes the surprisingly accurate description of human nature found not in the latest scientific journals but in the ancient pages of the Bible.

The Truth in True Crime is intended to be a practical wisdom book (the kind of book one might pen for one's grandchildren) and a Christian evidence book (the kind of book one might write for those who still doubt the explanatory power of Christianity). While every chapter includes a real death investigation, I've exchanged details between cases to protect the identity of victims (and suspects), and I've altered storylines to protect ongoing investigations.

Join us as we chase a few leads and examine the truths we discovered in true crime. Along the way, you may pick up a guiding principle or two to help you thrive and flourish as a human created in the image of God. You may also recognize yourself in the unique descriptions that Christian Scripture offers.

These lessons and clues will be valuable even if you don't believe in God, but make no mistake about it, each lead affirms an aspect of "biblical anthropology," the description of human nature that our divine Creator offers in the pages of the Bible. Rick and I typically chase leads to determine the identity of a killer in true crime murder cases. This book will help you chase leads and investigate clues to better understand your own identity and the identity of your Creator.

LEAD #1

A POOL OF BLOOD (UNDER MY FEET)

How to Make Age-Appropriate Mistakes

Wisdom is the daughter of experience.

—LEONARDO DA VINCI

Experience is merely the name men gave to their mistakes.

—OSCAR WILDE

Are you kidding me!” Alan yelled as I was completing a line in my notebook.

I was the new guy on the homicide team, still concerned about my image with the other five detectives who had been serving on the team for years. Alan was the senior member and a vocal source of praise or scorn. Tonight, he intended the latter.

“Look around, newbie,” Alan barked. “There are six of us standing here. Does anything stand out to you?”

For a moment, I wondered if I missed an important bit of evidence in the crime scene. Kenny Riggs was murdered in the concrete side yard of his modest home. He’d been tied up and beaten severely before he was eventually shot in the head. His son discovered his body. In my effort to impress this seasoned team, I arrived early and began a quick assessment of the area. Looking up from my small notebook, I could see my partners had now arrived.

I glanced at Alan, then down at my notes, searching for what I may have missed.

“I’m talking about *you*, kid, not whatever’s in your stupid notebook.

Look at the six of us.” Alan began singing the song from Sesame Street: “One of these things is not like the others, one of these things just doesn’t belong.” Several of the seasoned detectives laughed. Rick tried to keep a straight face.

My partners were standing on one side of the yellow crime scene tape. I was standing on the other.

Eager to evaluate the scene, I had lifted the tape and walked toward the body. All this *prior* to the arrival of the crime scene technicians and prior to any photography of the scene. Looking back, I realize how ridiculous this sounds. But early in my career as a detective, and prior to attending my first homicide school, it never occurred to me to protect the crime scene from *everyone*, including me.

I began to sheepishly exit the scene when Alan added yet another insult to my injury.

“Stop, knucklehead! Look where you’re standing!”

Poking out from under the right side of my shoe, I could see a darkened spot of concrete. Bloodred.

“The more you walk in that scene, the more you’re going to track blood.”

Rick couldn’t contain himself any longer: “Yeah, if we arrest the killer based on the shoeprint evidence, Wallace is our guy!”

Now everyone was laughing.

I slipped out of my shoes and carried them from the crime scene, walking delicately like a man trying to avoid land mines. Fortunately, cell phone technology hadn’t yet surpassed the flip phone, so no one was able to take a picture as I joined them on the other side of the tape with shoes in hand.



Defining What We Seek

Alan eventually became one of my closest friends. I turned to him often for knowledge *and* wisdom, and he taught me the difference between the two.

Everyone seems to value wisdom. Secular self-help manuals abound in the publishing industry, and the genre of “wisdom literature” dominates religious texts. Wisdom sells, for religious and nonreligious people alike. We flock to texts promising this coveted commodity.

But while most of us want to be “wise,” we often fail to distinguish wisdom from knowledge. Wisdom is sometimes described as “accumulated philosophical or scientific learning” or “scholarly knowledge.”¹ But if

wisdom is nothing more than “learning” or “knowledge,” why not use those words instead of “wisdom”? Wisdom appears to be something different, something more.

Some believe science can help us define the term. Igor Grossmann, an associate professor of psychology and director of the Wisdom and Culture Lab at the University of Waterloo in Canada, for example, invited behavioral and social scientists to “explore the possibility of a scientific consensus on the psychological characteristics of wisdom and best practices for its measurement.”² They concluded that “moral aspiration” was one of two “pillars of wisdom.” In other words, the scientists, “like many philosophers before them, considered wisdom to be *morally grounded*” (emphasis mine).

For example, is there a wise way to commit a murder? Or is murder unwise—by definition—because of its immoral nature?

This moral dimension to wisdom complicates the definition of the term. How, for example, are we to determine what is morally virtuous or vile? If wise choices are defined by their moral “goodness,” who gets to decide what is morally good (and, therefore, wise)? While science can establish “what is” (or what happened), it is incapable of determining what *ought* to be (or what *ought* to have happened). As David Hume observed centuries ago, it’s not clear how science alone can move from physical *descriptions* to moral *prescriptions*.³

So where can we turn to establish a moral “ought” if science can only provide an observable “is”?

Can people simply decide what is morally “good” or “bad”? In a culture where truth is largely a subjective matter of “lived experience” and personal opinion, it’s tempting to conclude that people might be the final authority when it comes to moral truths as well. But Kenny Riggs’ killer could not make the murder morally virtuous with a simple personal proclamation. The act was immoral regardless of what the killer personally believed.

Was the murder morally wrong simply because the people of California



EVIDENCE: Humans Covet Wisdom

Human beings have been wisdom-seekers across the ages and across the globe. The ancients (like Socrates, Confucius, and Ptahhotep) were known for their wise proclamations, and modern humans are no less interested in this sometimes-elusive commodity.

Why is this the case? Why are humans consistently interested in wisdom, even when applying this wisdom may not increase their comfort or gain?

passed a law against murder? Do groups of people decide what is morally vile? If California changed its laws, would the killing of Kenny Riggs suddenly become a virtuous act?

No. The moral nature of murder is not determined *subjectively* by people, neither individually nor collectively. The murder of Kenny Riggs was *objectively* immoral in a way that transcends individuals and groups.



Better Wisdom

If objective, transcendent wisdom is “morally grounded” (as philosophers, theologians, and even scientists agree), then it requires an objective, transcendent source for moral truth. That kind of wisdom is unavailable if moral truths are simply personal (or collective) opinions. If wisdom is morally negotiable, Kenny’s killer might have a case for the wisdom of his act.

Wisdom’s need for an objective moral foundation explains why the ancient Christian worldview provides a better basis for wisdom than the relativism of our culture does.

Christianity recognized the value of wisdom long before self-help books led the other genres at internet bookstores. The Bible describes wisdom as supremely valuable and better than gold, silver, treasure, or jewels.⁴ But more importantly, the Bible also recognizes that wisdom must include what scientists now describe as “moral aspiration.” True, objective, transcendent wisdom is grounded in the one true, objective, transcendent source for moral truth: God. Wisdom doesn’t change with the times or vary depending on human opinions or preferences. The “wisdom of the ages” is just that: wisdom spanning the ages, grounded in the unchanging moral nature of *the* ancient moral authority: God himself.

That’s why the Bible authors declared, “The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.”⁵ True wisdom calls us to recognize God as the unchanging source of moral truth and to shun what God describes as evil. All wise choices are also morally virtuous choices, and their moral virtue is grounded in the wise, moral authority of God. “The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.”⁶

Wisdom grounded in the nature of God is true, objective wisdom because God is both omniscient (all-knowing) *and* omnibenevolent

(all-good). The Bible declares, “The foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.”⁷

Christianity recognizes the value of wisdom and its dependence on moral virtue. But unlike human attempts to ground wisdom subjectively in popular, moral opinions, Christianity grounds wisdom in the unchanging, dependable nature of God.

Now, if you’re not a Christian believer, before you flinch at the idea of a moral code based on the nature of the Christian God, keep in mind that atheists *also* recognize the value of the Christian moral code. One study of believers and nonbelievers found that “atheists and theists appear to align on moral values related to protecting vulnerable individuals, liberty versus oppression, and being epistemically rational.”⁸ When prominent atheists say they can be “good without God,” they typically offer examples in which they embrace the values described in the Ten Commandments, the same moral virtues Christians uphold.

The question here is not whether nonbelievers can *know* or *learn* moral truth, but rather if nonbelievers can *ground* these truths in something other than God. Can true wisdom, the kind of transcendent wisdom most of us require as we navigate relationships, challenges, hardships (and murder investigations) best be found in the social science section of the library or on the theology shelves? Can we best determine what’s virtuous or vile by surveying cultural opinion or by sitting at the feet of our Creator?



Learning through Experience

I wiped the bottom of my shoes and followed along with the rest of our homicide team as the patrol sergeant briefed us about her observations prior to our arrival. I didn’t say a word for the rest of the evening.

I was embarrassed, to say the least. Consumed by failure, I felt like the dumbest detective in history. Looking back, however, I understand the role this failure played in my journey toward wisdom. Definitions describing wisdom as mere knowledge are inadequate. A better definition would include the important role of *experience*:

(Wisdom is) the ability to use your knowledge and experience to make good decisions and judgments.⁹

This definition recognizes our “moral aspirations” to make “good decisions and judgments” but also acknowledges the role of experience.

Experience is defined as “the conscious events that make up an individual life,”¹⁰ and none of us lives more than a few years without encountering failure. In fact, we’re more likely to experience failure than success. It’s much



EXAMPLE: Solomon Got It

Few people in history understood the value of wisdom as did Solomon, the ancient king of Israel. God told him, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.” Solomon could have asked for power, money, fame, or longevity. Instead, he asked for “a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong” (1 Kings 3:9 NIV).

Given everything you might pursue in life, how high is wisdom on your list?



easier to thoughtlessly mess things up than mindfully succeed. Just ask me—I’ve got a story about a crime scene to share with you.

But failure appears to be the *root* of wisdom and success. One study spanning over forty years and studying over one million pieces of data concluded that “every winner begins as a loser.”¹¹ Why? Because failure often leads to honest self-examination, and honest self-examination to wisdom—if the failing party is willing to learn.

I entered a crime scene prematurely on *one* occasion. I never did it again. That single episode revealed my status as a novice. It humbled me. My response was not indignation but the realization that there was still a

lot to learn. Mistakes were painfully common in my first weeks and months as an investigator, but those early miscues were critical to my later success.

Research confirms this truth, even for people who aren’t standing in a pool of blood. The aforementioned study found that repeated failures (if suffered early) were actually the *key* to success. “In other words, the faster you fail, the better your chances of success, and the more time between attempts, the more likely you are to fail again.”¹²

Even without this research data, the truth about early failures would be evident from the history of successful people. Jerry Seinfeld was booted off the stage when he froze during his first live appearance. Elvis Presley’s first performance at the Grand Ole Opry was so terrible that talent manager Jim Denny fired him and reportedly told him to stop singing publicly. The Wright brothers failed *many times* before becoming the first to fly. Thomas Edison failed more than a *thousand times* before successfully inventing the world’s first light bulb. James Dyson failed over *five thousand times* before successfully inventing his famous vacuum cleaner. Had they given up,

all would have been considered failures. They understood, however, the power of making *age-appropriate mistakes*.

I was the youngest member of our homicide team when caught standing in a pool of blood, and while that mistake was clearly a failure, it was an age-appropriate mistake. If Alan had committed the same blunder, he would have received an even harsher scolding from the team. After all, he had over fifteen years of experience, so they would have said, “He should have known better.”



Chase the Lead

If you're seeking wisdom, let the guy with blood on his shoes offer a few insights. I learned some of this from Alan but most of it from making bone-headed mistakes (some more public than others).

Embrace Your Age-Appropriate Mistakes

Everyone errs. Just do your best to fail in an age-appropriate manner. Don't sweat the blunders of your youth or the mistakes you make when you are new on the job. This is the time when you're *supposed* to make mistakes. The Bible recognizes that “we all stumble in many ways”¹³—some of us are just better at hiding it. It's been said that mistakes don't have to *define you* if you allow them to *refine you*. Embrace the inevitability of your early mistakes and move on. In each mistake, learn from it, rub some dirt on it, and shake it off. Try again.

Admit When You're the Fool

People who can't admit they made a mistake often refuse to change. (Why change? I didn't do anything wrong in the first place!) This is

when our “moral aspirations” need to guide us. Biblical wisdom calls us to “do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit,” but rather, in humility, to value others above ourselves.¹⁴ When Alan scolded me publicly, I was inclined to defend myself with equal vigor and sarcasm—maybe even try to justify my actions—but wisdom called me to take the higher, more honest, road. I was, after all, the fool standing in blood.

Let Others Fail for You

Oliver Wendell Holmes reportedly recommended, “Learn from the mistakes of others . . . You can’t live long enough to make them all yourself!”¹⁵ Wisdom comes from life experiences and failures, but they don’t have to be *your* life experiences and failures. Become a careful “mistake watcher,” and glean wisdom from the wise counsel of family and friends. Rethink the way you ask people for advice. Rather than just asking, “How did you do that?” ask also, “What mistakes did you make along the way?” Failure is a good teacher. Start learning from the failures of others, including the historical failures recorded on the pages of the Bible. Biblical history is replete with men and women who failed miserably yet were redeemed and restored through their failures.

Build a New Foundation

Once you’ve deconstructed a few *contemporary* failures (including your own), construct a foundation of ancient wisdom to limit your mistakes going forward. Start by consulting the Master Builder. According to the Bible, people who lack wisdom should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault.¹⁶ King Solomon wrote, “By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.”¹⁷ If you want to build a house filled with knowledge leading to success, start with the wisdom of God. Jesus said everyone who heard his words and *did them* would be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.¹⁸ Rock-solid decisions are built on the rock-solid wisdom of Jesus.

Listen to Old People

Why do most people value the insight of their grandparents? Because they’ve “been there and done that.” The longer you’ve been around, the more likely you are to have made mistakes and learned something

important. Studies reveal that “crystallized intelligence” (the accumulation of knowledge, facts, and skills acquired throughout life) is “a necessary condition for wisdom in all age-groups.”¹⁹ That may be why “wisdom belongs to the aged, and understanding to the old.”²⁰ Wise *young* people typically spend time learning from wiser *old* people, including the ancients whose wisdom has been documented in Scripture. You’re never too young to learn from the oldest in your family or the most ancient in the Bible. Get started.

Do Better

Make a commitment to better decision-making. Ask yourself, (1) Is what I’m about to do within the moral will of God? Is it permissible according to the Bible? (2) Is this action generally wise from a practical perspective? Will it help me reasonably, morally, and efficiently accomplish the goal God has for me in this setting? (3) Does the action utilize the gifts and talents God has given me? (4) Will this decision elevate or glorify God (rather than me)? Can I leverage the opportunity to share Jesus with others?²¹ It’s hard to make a bad decision if these four objectives are forefront in your mind.

Tell Someone

Wisdom is transferrable only if people are willing to *do the transferring*. Once you know something worth sharing, make sure you take your place in the long line of wisdom-sharers.



The Truth in True Crime: You Were Created to Learn

“Did they teach you to stand in blood at the homicide school?” Alan didn’t really expect a response. I foolishly gave him one anyway.

“Last month’s class was fully registered; I don’t go until next month.”

“Can’t come soon enough,” he replied. I was content to let Alan have the last word. *That’s* one lesson I’d already learned.

I considered myself a learner prior to becoming a detective. As an atheist and a committed naturalist, I held education in high regard. I believed humans evolved because of our capacity to learn, and I saw education as the key to progress (including my progress as a detective).

Most humans see themselves as learners in need of an education. One global study of parents, for example, found 79 percent believed their kids needed some sort of advanced education to achieve their life goals.²² Studies also confirm the ongoing value of learning. People with higher levels of education live longer,²³ are generally healthier,²⁴ and are even kinder to others.²⁵ Humans thrive and flourish when they exercise their ability to learn.



**EXPLANATION: We Seek
What We Lack**

Most people, on a global level, believe in God or a “higher power.” We innately understand our comparative lack of wisdom relative to that of such a Being, and this is reflected in our desire for wisdom.

We also innately recognize the need for an objective “wisdom standard,” beyond the personal preferences of individuals and societies.

Christianity explains our desire for wisdom and provides the objective, transcendent source for *true* wisdom, grounded in the omniscience and omnibenevolence of God.



According to the biblical worldview, humans were created as wisdom-seekers, designed to learn. So if you’re wondering why we value education and why learning is one of many keys to human flourishing, now you know: it’s part of the Creator’s design. God is an infinite Being with perfect knowledge. He is the source of all truth. As finite humans with limited knowledge, we find ourselves seeking what we don’t yet possess. In fact, God’s infinite wisdom exposes our naivete and creates in us a desire to know more. As C. S. Lewis once wrote, “Thirst was made for water; inquiry for truth.”²⁹ We thirst because water exists; we seek wisdom because truth exists (as possessed in the mind of our Creator). We pursue wisdom *initially* because we know it’s available; we pursue wisdom *continually* because we know there’s always more to learn, especially when compared to the knowledge of God.

Wisdom matters to humans. It’s why we continue to seek truth and read books, even a book like this one. *We were created to learn.*

As it turns out, the Bible described humans as learners and wisdom-seekers long before we proved it with scientific studies. God created us to learn. The Bible says our desire begins in our youth, when we are “trained up” in the way we should go, continues every day as we grow with our parents, and extends into our lives as disciples of Jesus.²⁶ We are called to be transformed by the renewal of our minds, with the Holy Spirit’s promise to teach us all things.²⁷ The very word *disciple* comes from the Latin word *discipulus*, meaning “student” or “learner.”²⁸

According to the biblical worldview, humans were created as wisdom-seekers, designed to learn.

So if you’re wondering why we value education and why learning is one of