

# What is worth more than gold and silver? (16:16)

How much better it is to get wisdom than gold and to get understanding is to be chosen above silver.

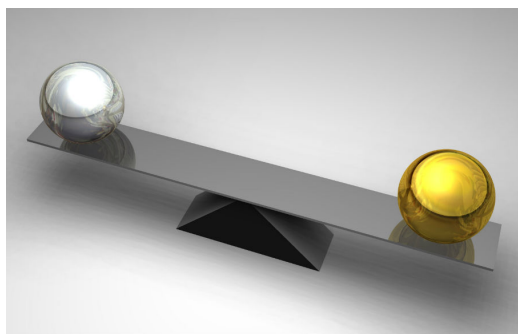
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## THE TEXT (NASB)

How much better it is to get wisdom than gold and to get understanding is to be chosen above silver.

*How much better is it to get wisdom than gold and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver! Classic KJV - Proverbs 16:16*

## INTRODUCTION



Wisdom is worth more than wealth, but sadly, we're easily side-tracked. Once we've secured our basic needs, what else do we pursue? Usually more stuff.

Wealth traditionally has been stored in the form of gold and silver. This proverb says that wisdom and understanding—intangible life skills—should be preferred over gold and silver. They are safer, more portable, non-taxable, and less stressful. Most importantly, they provide unending benefits.

What treasure are you working for?



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## COMMENTARY



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Wisdom is so much better than gold, we can't identify all its advantages. In his *Exposition of the Bible*, John Gill expands: "Wisdom... is abundantly better, it is inexpressibly so; it cannot be well said how much better it is, and therefore it is put by way of question." Wisdom becomes almost life itself.

Gold and silver are not necessities of life, like food, clothing and shelter. A person seeks gold and silver only after the necessities. So this text is not addressed to anyone on the edge of survival. It speaks to those with the potential to accumulate the luxuries of life, like silver and gold. They must decide how to use their surplus. What should they get? The Hebrew word for "get," קנה (qā•nāh, pronounced "qah-nah"), is also translated as "acquire" in Proverbs 4:5 and as "buy" in Proverbs 20:14.

## Shared Benefits

Gold and silver share the following advantages with wisdom and understanding:

- Portable: Easy to carry in small quantities;
- Concealable: Easy to hide in small quantities;
- Recognized internationally: Prized by every people on Earth;
- Liquid: Exchangeable for goods and services as needed;
- Beneficial: Providing much assistance... before death;
- Robust: Proof against inflation and deflation;
- Available: Can be sought from God in prayer.

## Superior Benefits

Wisdom and understanding have the following advantages over gold and silver:

- Most portable: Easy to carry in great quantities;
- Tax-Proof: Untaxable in any form—and can even reduce taxes;
- Theft-Proof: Cannot be stolen;
- Stable: Independent of market valuations;



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- Timeless: Providing benefits after death;
- Flexible: Distributable in precise amounts, with no need for change;
- Maintenance-free: Stored and protected without security or insurance;
- Stress-free: Decreased personal anxiety;
- Abundance: Increases with use.

## Gain Understanding and Wisdom at Home First



As in other proverbs, gold is matched up with wisdom, and silver with understanding. This implies that wisdom is superior to understanding. It also implies that the way to wisdom is accumulating understanding—just as a person must buy one gold coin with many silver coins. But how do we get understanding?

The Hebrew word for understanding is also translated as “prudence” and “insight.” Where do we find it? Often first at home. Even “bad parents” usually teach their kids at least one valuable life skill. So God tells us to learn whatever we can from our parents, especially from our fathers (Proverbs 4:1-4).

My dad first lost his business in 1939 to the Nazis, when the Germans invaded Poland, and then in 1946 to the Communists, when the Russians suppressed private enterprise in Poland after World War Two. Finally, in 1958, he quit a well-paying position to immigrate to Canada. So he put the most emphasis on education, rather than asset accumulation. Education, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom are all life skills, and more. They are life itself, proof against loss or theft.

Human fathers are not always reliable, but there is a Father better and greater. His words are “more precious than thousands of gold and silver pieces” (Psalms 119:72). The Creator is the spiritual Father of all who trust and obey Jesus, the Christ.



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## OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Amazingly, wonderfully, the Bible says that, in Jesus Christ, we can find all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3). It says: All the benefits of wisdom and knowledge are to be found in Jesus. A mere word from Jesus can restore sight to the blind (John 9:17) or make the crippled walk (Acts 3:6). No amount of education surpasses “the information” in Jesus Christ. So we study Him.

Jesus was the either the greatest egomaniac or liar of all time—to the point of death, or else He was and is God Almighty (John 8:58), who has entered human history and changed all of history and all our lives. So we study Him.

## APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite translation and think about it often.
- What do you prefer: Getting more stuff or getting more skills? Pick skills.
- Seek people and places where you can get good instruction—even if it seems expensive.
- Temporarily ignore your parents’ shortcomings. List three specific instructions they gave you for success in life.

Which one of these steps, if any, does Jesus want you to take now? Ask Him.



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## KEY WORDS

anxiety, assets, better life (quality), folly, gold, home, inflation, insurance, silver, stress, taxes, treasure, understanding, wisdom

## ILLUSTRATION

### Who is Prudent Pauline?



Prudent Pauline is a planner. She looks before she leaps, she thinks before she speaks. Her favourite mottos are: “Haste makes waste,” “brains over brawn,” and “don’t jump to conclusions.”

When Pauline first heard that famous maxim: “The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step,” she said NO! It begins with a good map. The map must be studied and the best route plotted. Consider road conditions, terrain, rest stops, refuelling, hostile territory, expected weather, travelling companions, clothing, supplies, and many more factors, including (if necessary) a guide.

She has studied the wisdom of Solomon and even helped teach him a thing or two. Solomon wrote these words about 3,000 years ago in honour of Prudent Pauline. “Whatever your hand finds to do (no matter what you are doing) do it with all your might (give it your full ability and energy) for there is no activity or planning or wisdom after you die—it will be too late.” Pauline says, “First comes wisdom, then comes planning (her favourite activity), and then comes activity.”

Pauline makes the time to do tax planning. She does a work plan every day. She uses a day

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timer or planner to assign priorities to her activities. She and Diligent Daniel are an incredible pair. Pauline does all her homework before she starts an activity.

