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*Ministry Leader, Michigan*

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# Rationalism, Rationality, and the Scriptures



Fathers of modern Rationalism (clockwise from top left): René Descartes (1596–1650), Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716), and Immanuel Kant (1724–1804).

**A**LL HERE IN THE CAPITAL HAVE CHOSEN a career that is based in intellectual property. As a Public Servant your ability to be successful, is directly related to the agility you possess in reasoning. One observation I have made in ministry in the capital is that this quality — to quickly and effectively reason — separates the senior Members of the community from the novice. Solutions to social problems, ideas, the ability to persuade, debate, write and speak, all depend and are under-girded by your acumen to reason well. Without it you're dust, as they say. With it you're a star.

Read on, my friend.



Ralph Drollinger

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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

CABINET: 7:00 AM Wednesdays, Location Undisclosed. *Refreshments Served.*  
 SENATE: 8:00 AM Tuesdays, Rotating Offices of Senators. *Hot Breakfast Served.*  
 HOUSE: 7:30 AM Thursdays, The Capitol Hill Club. *Hot Breakfast Served.*

*The views expressed in each Bible study are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study Sponsor.*





★ MINISTRY UPDATE

## Dean Mathis

Ministry Leader, Michigan



As the Michigan State Legislature commences its 100th session this year, Dr. Dean Mathis begins the 7th year of his Capitol Ministries® Bible study ministry to lawmakers in the Great Lakes state. It's a ministry that he says has blessed him as much as it has blessed those whom he serves.

"I've seen the hand of God so many times," Dr. Mathis said. "And, I've been a little touched by the fact that legislators always introduce me when they see me in the capitol. They say, 'This is a man of God here, he teaches the Word to us.'"

"This is not a hostile environment to the Bible at all. I know there are some parts of the country where that is not true at all, but here it is true."

In the legislature's centennial year, Dr. Mathis is recommitted to creating a sit-down Bible study which has been a goal since 2012 when his ministry began.

"There is an unreached people group in the legislature who I hope to reach through a sit-down study and I need prayer support because I will have to open some doors to get that done."

*Continued on page 3*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Scripture is the foundation upon which all good reasoning is built. It is the only reliable foundation for all logic and good judgment. It is the only trustworthy basis for the beginning of thoughts, ideas, actions and practices. The Word of God is intended to be the mind's bedrock, its compass.

## II. RATIONALISM AND RATIONALITY

As important as the aforementioned is however, a distinction must be immediately made between two close English words: Rationalism and rationality.

### RATIONALISM IS AN ANTI-BIBLICAL PHILOSOPHY THAT IS CONDESCENDING TOWARD BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

In contrast to biblically based rational thinking, wherein scriptural precepts, the presupposition of the Bible informing our premise for what is ultimate truth, the Rationalist sets his mind and his ability to reason as both the source and final test of all truth. The Rationalist's mind becomes his god, since personal mental faculties are authoritative over and above Scripture in his way of thinking.

Accordingly, the Rationalist denies divine revelation; the beginning point of all reasoning that puts forth Scripture as preserved truth, untainted by the fall of man (known as "The Fall" per Genesis, chapter 3), wherein sin entered and affected the world — even to such an extent that it tainted man's ability to reason perfectly without a bias for sin (this is commonly referred to in theology as the noetic effect of sin).

### SCRIPTURE, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS UNALTERED BY THE FALL; IT IS UNTAINTED BY SIN

Scripture has traveled the long road of time and is unaltered; the Bible is unstained by sin and its noetic effect on the mind of man.

The imputation of sin in Genesis 3 not only brought spiritual death to the soul of man, but it damaged his intellectual purity as well. Man possesses a fallen mind: This is evidenced by the fact that the closer he reasons in the arena of morality the greater the noetic effect is evident. From the perspective of biblical revelation, the Rationalist has not escaped the noetic effect of sin and he is either naïve or rejects this biblical premise.

Those who worship at the altar of their brain power see themselves as (and in their pride of self absorption)



the starting point for the discovery of truth, and in so doing, are categorically rejecting the biblical truth that the mind is fallen. In essence they are attesting to what the famous French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre meant when he penned, “A finite mind without an infinite reference point is absurd.” (Although the atheist-Marxist probably didn’t mean it the way I am interpreting it.)

In summary of the introduction, whereas the Christian rightly rejects the philosophical premise of Rationalism, it must be made clear that he does not reject rationality.

### RATIONALITY IS THE USE OF THE MIND BASED ON AND UTILIZING GOD’S WORD AS ITS FOUNDATION

Scriptural truth, as it is mastered by the Public Servant, becomes the always-reliable basis for proper thinking; the foundation that enables the ability to make wise judgments and good policy, not only in vocational pursuits, but in personal life. That is precisely what wisdom and discernment are: sound logic, clear thought, and common sense based upon the mastery of scriptural precepts. Scripture is the bulwark upon which all good reasoning stems. Everyone in the Capitol needs to master the Scriptures in order to be truly wise in personal, familial, and vocational life.

Vocationally, to proffer policy that has no scriptural basis, is to act foolishly and disserve the people of our most fabulous country. Reason, apart from the Word of God, inevitably leads to unsound ideas, whereas reason subjected to the Word of God is at the heart of wise spiritual discernment and policy formation. God wants us all to use our minds based upon His Scripture; He wants us to be wise and discerning in all we do.

The Westminster Confession of Faith clarifies this when it states, “The whole counsel of God ... is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture” (Chapter 1, Section 6). As you intently learn the Word, you will find that you are able to make sound and careful logical life decisions and policy formation because those abilities flow from knowing and embracing scriptural principles.

Interpret the text of Scripture accurately. Discover the context of the passage, the original authorial intent, and then apply its principles with sensible, careful, thoughtful and Spirit-directed reasoning. These are the building blocks, the ingredients of discernment. That’s how you craft good policy. That’s rationality not Rationalism.

When Martin Luther was instructed to recant his teachings on what

*Continued from page 2*

Gathering Legislators for a weekly study proved difficult in Michigan because the majority of legislators are from the Lower Peninsula and are able to commute to centrally-located Lansing every day.

Undeterred, and with the help of a volunteer from a supporting local church, Dr. Mathis recorded his Bible studies on CDs so legislators could listen to them in their vehicles as they travel to and from Lansing. A rousing success, the Windshield Ministry was born and the demand for Bible study CDs has grown every year.

One legislator told him that “all the chaos buzzing” in his head just goes away as he listens to the Bible studies on his drive home. Another has said that he listens to the Bible study on the commute and then when he gets home, he listens to it again.

A familiar face at the Michigan Capitol, Dr. Mathis receives telephone calls and is often stopped on steps or in hallways by legislators who ask if he would please stop by their office to pray with them.

Last year, Dr. Mathis recorded 15 Bible studies on CDs and distributed 762 of them to legislators, with an additional 150 given to supporters and people who request them.

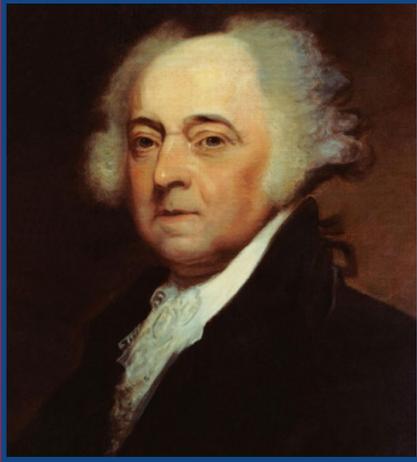
Committed to in-depth Bible studies, Dr. Mathis believes they are vital for legislators for a number of reasons.

“The Bible gives us the mind of God and if we want to think straightly, we must study His Word. Scripture tells us that Christ is the sum total of all knowledge.

“He is our starting point. That is where we develop our world view, and if we don’t, we are not going to know the truth. We will make erroneous decisions not only about personal morals, but also about law.” **cm**



John Adams



*“The Christian religion is, above all the religions that ever prevailed or existed in ancient or modern times, the religion of wisdom, virtue, equity and humanity.”*

— John Adams, second President of the United States; signer of the Declaration of Independence; judge; diplomat; one of two signers of the Bill of Rights.

John Adams, *Works*, Vol. III, p. 421, diary entry for July 26, 1796.

the Bible taught regarding true salvation and how one achieves it via faith alone (versus the payment of indulgences, etc.), his response is illustrative of this very point. He said, “Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason, my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience would be neither right nor safe. God help me. Here I stand, I can do no other.” Luther’s reasoning was based on the convictions he’d gained from studying Scripture.

It follows then that those, including yourself, who spurn the truths, precepts and great doctrines of Scripture — and sound reason based on the same — are not wise or discerning.



Martin Luther

You may think you are, but you’re misguided. In the end your policies, home-crafted brews, void of scriptural precepts, will not serve

you or the people well.

Now let us turn our attention to the biblical passages that underscore the premises of this introduction.

### III. SELECTED OT PASSAGES ON THE NEED FOR WISDOM AND DISCERNMENT

In the passages that follow, note the repetitious and inner-connectivity of the words *truth*, *knowledge*, *discernment*, *wisdom*, and *understanding* and how they stem from God and His Word.

#### A. PSALM 51:6

*Behold, you desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.*

This passage appears right after David exclaims his sinful status, not only of himself, but for all of mankind, wherein he states, *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me* (51:5). Even though man is innately sinful, God *desires* all to know His *truth* and then as a result, live skillfully (*wisdom* is “the skill at living life for God’s glory”).

#### B. PSALM 111:10

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good under-*



*standing have all those who do his commandments;*

*The fear of the Lord*, this passage states, is the *beginning* point of living, or legislating skillfully. A reverential awe and a submissive *fear of the Lord* are essential to *wisdom*. Without it man rejects God's Word, thinking and concluding matters with his own mind (Rationalism), devoid of any heavenly plumb line, standard, or premise. As was stated in the introduction, he becomes his own god.

DR. "WELLITHINK"  
BECOMES THE  
SUPERIOR SOURCE  
OF KNOWLEDGE OVER  
AND ABOVE THE GOD  
OF THE BIBLE

In order to be wise, one must exchange his own attitudes, will, feelings, deeds, and goals for those of the true God who has revealed himself in Scripture; such equates to *fearing the Lord*.

C. PSALM 119:66

*Teach me good discernment and knowledge, for I believe in Your commandments.*

Note again the clear relationship between God's Word (*Your commandments*) and having *discernment* and *knowledge*. The premise of Scripture is that these ideas are intrinsically intertwined. One cannot possess one

without the other.

D. PROVERBS 2:2-6

*Make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding; for if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.*

Accordingly, the *knowledge of God* is derived only, achieved only, from and via the study and application of His Book. Further underscoring the connection between the words of *His mouth* being from the Bible, contained in Scripture, is evidenced in what Paul states to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17:

*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

The Greek word for *inspired* is theopneustos, meaning "God breathed."

THE SCRIPTURES ARE  
THE ACTUAL EVIDENCE  
OF GOD'S BREATH

♥ VERSE OF THE WEEK

Psalm 111:10

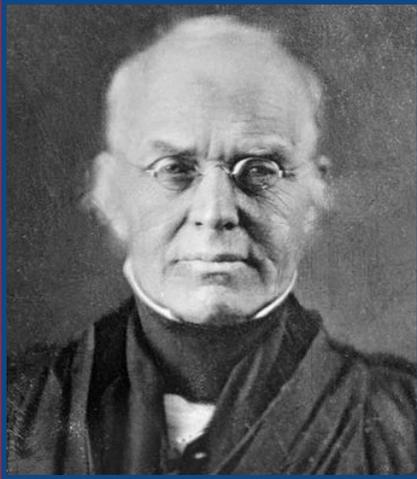
*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*



*In order to be wise, one must exchange his own attitudes, will, feelings, deeds, and goals for those of the true God who has revealed himself in Scripture.*



Joseph Story



*“One of the beautiful boasts of our municipal jurisprudence is that Christianity is a part of the Common Law. There never has been a period in which the Common Law did not recognize Christianity as lying at its foundations.”*

— Joseph Story, U.S., Congressman; “Father of American Jurisprudence”; U.S. Supreme Court Justice appointed by President James Madison.

Joseph Story, *Life and Letters of Joseph Story*, William W. Story, editor (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1851), Vol. II, p. 8.

E. PROVERBS 4:7

*“The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; and with all your acquiring, get understanding.”*

I prefer the more vernacular NKJV translation of this passage, *“Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.”* This passage goes on to personify wisdom in 4:8-9 and list her benefits: *“Exalt her [wisdom] and she will promote you. She will bring you honor, when you embrace her. She will place on your head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory she will deliver to you (NKJV).”* These are the tremendous benefits inuring to those who are *attentive, inclining, crying for, lifting their voices for, seeking, and searching* (cf. Proverbs 2:2–4) for God’s *wisdom*. Why would anyone avoid such blessings? Start in on the habit of Bible study today and get blessed my friend!

Now let us turn our attention to NT passages that underscore the necessity to reason from Scripture versus reasoning not from Scripture.

**IV. SELECTED NT PASSAGES ON THE NEED FOR WISDOM AND DISCERNMENT**

A. COLOSSIANS 1:9

*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 with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,*

Paul prayed that the Colossian believers would *be filled with the knowledge of His will* which is equated here with possessing *wisdom and spiritual understanding*. It is quite easy to discern God’s will with your mind and your rational faculties when you have habitually and continually *filled* it with God’s precepts from regular study. A *wise* person can therefore be further understood as someone who has accumulated and organized God’s principles in order to automatically apply them in daily living.

Remember when you first learned to drive and how much concentration and effort it demanded? Now you drive almost subconsciously from regular practice and application of your state’s driving laws. *Wise* living is parallel to this.

**WHEREAS THE WORLD MIGHT CALL YOU AN IDEOLOGUE, SCRIPTURE CALLS YOU A PERSON OF CONVICTION — SOMEONE WHO HAS A SURE RUDDER!**

Inviolable principles stemming from



God's Word are infallible and indefatigable.

## B. COLOSSIANS 2:3

*... in whom [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

This Pauline passage exclaims that *all the treasures of wisdom* are in *Christ*. Our sufficiency for *wisdom and knowledge* is not found extra-biblically in some other form. It is in *Christ* alone.

This is a bold, contrasting statement given the context of what Paul is saying: Contextually, the Colossian church was being attacked by Gnostic heresy — the Gnostic's view of the beginning point of knowledge was that it was something they singularly possessed. The Gnostics were esoterics (Merriam-Webster: knowledge that is restricted to a small group) in their understanding of the origins of knowledge, ancient day Rationalists, if you will. Paul herein is combating and refuting this erroneous idea of the beginning point of knowledge — as if the Gnostics possessed a secret source of *wisdom and knowledge!*

Like many Rationalists today, they possessed an aura of elitism. They were the “haves” and others, in this case the believers in Colossae, were the “have nots.” Paul discounts their falsities stating *all* the *wisdom* of

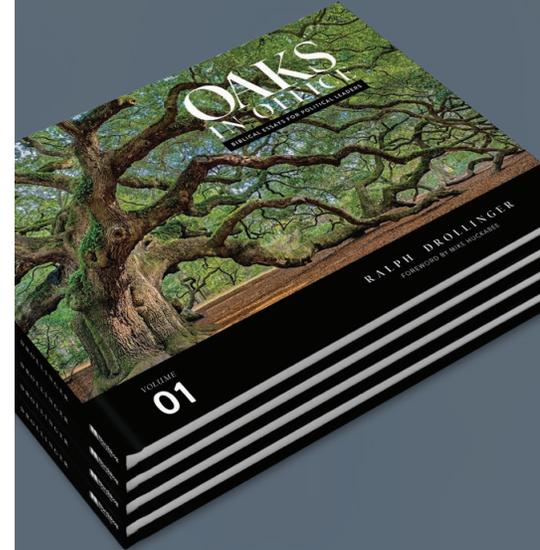
God and *knowledge* about Him is revealed through *Christ* and His written Word!

The Word of God, not self-thinking void of scriptural truths, human surveys, socio or physiological analyses, etc., should be your preeminent basis for *knowledge* in policy formation and decision making! Whereas the Word of God is unchanging, history reveals that the latter epistemological sources history reveals, fluctuate over time. (Epistemology means “the study or a theory of the nature and grounds of knowledge especially with reference to its limits and validity” [Merriam-Webster].) Their degrees of certitude are less than the total certainty of the Word of God.

## C. 2 TIMOTHY 3:16

*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;*

This passage, mentioned previously in relation to Proverbs 2, is deserving of stand-alone consideration in this study and outline. Literally, *inspired* means “God-breathed.” In essence, another way to state this is, all Scripture is given by inspiration. God divinely *inspired* or (my word) “inspired” the writers of His Word. It is therefore a reliable foundation from which you can reason. It is your primary, superior basis for authoritative reasoning.



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## V. CONCLUSION

The wise Public Servant must regularly study the Word of God in order to have a lasting impact in service to the state. To craft policy that is not somehow rooted in Scripture is to have a temporal effect and is of disservice to the country. Reason from Scripture verses rationalizing from your mind only. **cm**

### MINISTRIES ESTABLISHED AND BUILDING

- UNITED STATES
  - Albany, New York
  - Annapolis, Maryland
  - Atlanta, Georgia
  - Austin, Texas
  - Boise, Idaho
  - Boston, Massachusetts
  - Denver, Colorado
  - Dover, Delaware
  - Carson City, Nevada
  - Charleston, West Virginia
  - Cheyenne, Wyoming
  - Columbia, South Carolina
  - Columbus, Ohio
  - Concord, New Hampshire
  - Hartford, Connecticut
  - Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
  - Honolulu, Hawaii
  - Jefferson City, Missouri
  - Lansing, Michigan
  - Lincoln, Nebraska
  - Little Rock, Arkansas
  - Madison, Wisconsin
  - Montpelier, Vermont
  - Nashville, Tennessee
  - Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
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  - Providence, Rhode Island
  - Raleigh, North Carolina
  - Richmond, Virginia
  - Sacramento, California
  - Salem, Oregon
  - Santa Fe, New Mexico
  - Springfield, Illinois
  - Topeka, Kansas
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### INTERNATIONAL

- Abuja, Nigeria
- Accra, Ghana
- Antananarivo, Madagascar
- Asunción, Paraguay
- Bangui, Central African Republic
- Brasilia, Brazil
- Bucharest, Romania
- Bujumbura, Burundi
- Dodoma, Tanzania
- Freetown, Sierra Leone
- Georgetown, Guyana
- Kiev, Ukraine
- Kigali, Rwanda
- Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Libreville, Gabon
- Lomé, Togo
- Lusaka, Zambia
- Malabo, Equatorial Guinea
- Maputo, Mozambique
- Mexico City, Mexico
- Monrovia, Liberia
- Montevideo, Uruguay
- Nairobi, Kenya
- N'Djamena, Tchad
- Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
- Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
- Porto-Novo, Benin
- Quito, Ecuador
- Riga, Latvia
- San Jose, Costa Rica
- Suva, Fiji
- Tegucigalpa, Honduras
- Vilnius, Lithuania
- Warsaw, Poland
- Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire
- Yaoundé, Cameroun