

JULY 18, 2022

MEMBERS BIBLE STUDY ~ UNITED STATES CAPITAL



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"San Giovanni evangelista a Patmos," Jacopo Vignali (1592–1664), oil on canvas, San Gaetano, Florence

Here in the capital, you have chosen a career that is based on intellectual property. As a public servant, your ability to execute vocationally, therefore, 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

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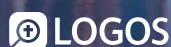
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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

Former Cabinet Members / White House Senior Staff: Wednesdays 7am, Zoom.

Senate Members: Tuesdays 8am, rotating offices, hot breakfast served.

House Members: Thursdays 8am, AG Hearing Room, Longworth 1302, hot breakfast served.



■ MINISTRY UPDATE

CapMin Regional Directors Named



A contingent of Capitol Ministries (CapMin) leaders met last week to hammer out plans to advance the bold mission to establish discipleship Bible ministries to local leaders in the 40,000 incorporated cities and counties across America.

“It felt like one of those rare times in life when you get to be involved in the very beginnings of something that has nation-changing potential,” said Nate Belkstrom, CapMin Midwest regional director for Local Government Ministries (LGM). “And that’s nation-changing potential not only here in America, but also in other nations of the world.”

Pastor Belkstrom was one of seven newly named LGM regional directors who participated in CapMin’s required training in California. The men were recently appointed to work with Dr. Dan DeShong, Global Director for LGM, to help recruit, vet, train, and mentor

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Rationalism, Rationality, and the Scriptures

from the novice. Solutions to social problems, ideas to benefit your constituency, and the ability to persuade, debate, write, and speak, all depend on and are undergirded 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

I. INTRODUCTION

Scripture, the foundation upon which all good reasoning is built, is the only reliable underpinning for logic and good judgment. The Bible 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 this foundation 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.

Biblically based rational thinking involves scriptural precepts—the presupposition of the Bible—informing

our minds for what is ultimate truth. By contrast, the rationalist sets his mind and his ability to reason as both the source and final test of all truth. In the rationalist’s way of thinking, his mind becomes his “god” since he makes his personal mental faculties the authority over and above Scripture.

Accordingly, the rationalist denies *divine revelation*, the beginning point of all reasoning that puts forth Scripture as the preserved truth, untainted by the Fall of man,¹ wherein sin entered and affected the world. The entrance of sin impacted the world to such an extent that it tainted man’s ability to reason perfectly without a bias for sin.²

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.



Fathers of Modern Rationalism



Immanuel Kant
(1724–1804)



Gottfried Leibniz
(1646–1716)



Baruch Spinoza
(1632–1677)



René Descartes
(1596–1650)

The imputation of sin in Genesis 3 not only brought spiritual death to the soul of man but also damaged his intellectual purity as well. Man possesses a fallen mind, which 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 naive or rejecting of this biblical premise.

Those who worship at the altar of their brainpower (and in their pride of self-being) consider themselves the starting point for the discovery of truth. In so doing, they are categorically rejecting the biblical truth that the mind is fallen. In essence, they are attesting to the words the famous French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre penned, “No finite point has meaning without an infinite reference point” (although the atheist-Marxist probably didn’t mean it the way I am interpreting it).

In summary of the introduction, wherein we saw that 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, as well as the foundation that enables the ability to make wise judgments and good policy, not only in vocational pursuits, but also in personal life. Sound logic, clear thought, and common sense based upon the mastery of scriptural precepts are precisely what constitute wisdom and discernment. Scripture is the bulwark from which all good reasoning stems. Everyone in the Capitol needs to master the Scriptures 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.

♥ 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.





Continued from page 2

ministry leader candidates and to grow LGM in their regions of the U.S. Each man also leads an LGM discipleship Bible study to political public servants in his community.

In addition to the training, the CapMin leaders also devised strategies and plans to further ongoing efforts to plant discipleship Bible study ministries to mayors, city and county commissioners, city managers, school board members, and other local public servants throughout the nation. The training was led by Dr. DeShong and Ralph Drollinger, president and founder of Capitol Ministries.

CapMin Board Member Randy Adams, who also serves as the executive director/treasurer of the Northwest Baptist Convention, spoke about the history of the United States, as well as the history of missions that had been successful due in great part to supporting systems and structures.

For several years CapMin has been building discipleship ministries for local leaders in the U.S. and in nations around the world. Thus far LGM Bible studies to local public servants have been planted in neighborhoods in California, Texas, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Oregon, Idaho, Missouri, Ohio, and in dozens of provinces and territories in European nations. The successful methodologies created in the meetings will be enacted and replicated across the U.S. and, eventually, the world.

The Westminster Confession of Faith clarifies this understanding 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.”³ 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 ingredients of discernment are the building blocks to crafting good policy. That’s rationality—not rationalism.

When Martin Luther was instructed to recant his teachings on what the Bible taught regarding true salvation and how to achieve it via faith alone (versus the payment of indulgences, etc.), his response as follows is illustrative of this very point.

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.⁴

Luther’s reasoning was based on the convictions he’d gained from studying Scripture.



Martin Luther (1483–1546)

It follows then that those who spurn the truths, precepts, and great doctrines of Scripture—and sound reason based on the same—are not wise or discerning. Government leaders who deny the Scripture may think they are wise, but they are misguided. In the end, their policies, house-crafted brews void of scriptural precepts, will serve neither the leader nor the people well.

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

III. SELECTED OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES ON THE NEED FOR WISDOM AND DISCERNMENT

In the passages that follow, note the repetition 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 for himself, but also 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.⁵

B. PSALM 111:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments.

The fear of the Lord, as 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 fear, 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.

To be wise, we must exchange our own attitudes, will, feelings, deeds, and goals for those of the true God Who has revealed Himself in Scripture. Such an exchange 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 abilities are intrinsically intertwined. A person cannot possess one ability without the other.

D. PROVERBS 2:2-6

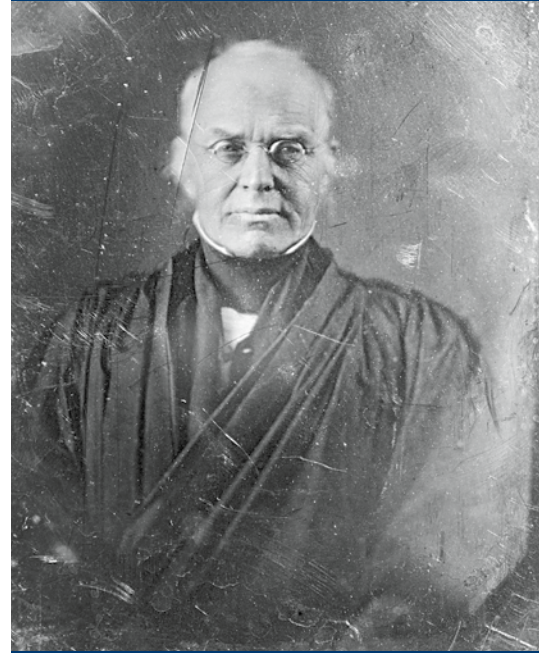
Make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding; for if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will discern the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives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

Accordingly, the *knowledge of God* is only derived and achieved from and via the study and application of His Book. Further underscoring of the connection between the words of *His mouth* contained in Scripture and the *knowledge of God* 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."

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, 8.



George Washington



“I now make it my earnest prayer that God would... most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of the mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion.”

— George Washington, first president of the United States, commander in chief of the Continental Army, member of the Continental Congress, president of the Constitutional Convention, “Father of His Country,” judge.

George Washington, *The Last Official Address of His Excellency George Washington to the Legislature of the United States* (Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1783), p. 12; see also *The New Annual Register or General Repository of History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1783* (London: G. Robinson, 1784), 150.

The Scriptures are the actual evidence of God’s breath.

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, which says, “*Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.*” This passage goes on to personify wisdom in 4:8–9 (NKJV) 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.”

These are the tremendous benefits inuring to believers 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? Begin the habit of Bible study today and be blessed, my friend!

Now let us turn our attention to New Testament (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 in this verse with possessing *wisdom and spiritual understanding*. Discerning God’s will with your mind and your rational faculties is quite easy 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 illustration.

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 2:2b–3

Christ Himself, in whom 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, rather in *Christ* alone.

This bold, contrasting statement is given in the context of Paul's declaration: contextually, the Colossian church was being attacked by Gnostic heresy. The Gnostics viewed the beginning point of knowledge as something they singularly possessed. The Gnostics were esoterics⁶ 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 that *all* the *wisdom* of God and *knowledge* about Him is revealed through *Christ* and His written Word!

The Word of God should be your pre-eminent basis for knowledge in policy formation and decision making—not human surveys, socio or physiological analyses, self-thinking void of scriptural truths, etc.! Whereas the Word of God is unchanging, history reveals that the

latter epistemological⁷ sources fluctuate over time. Their degrees of certitude are less than the total certainty of the Word of God.

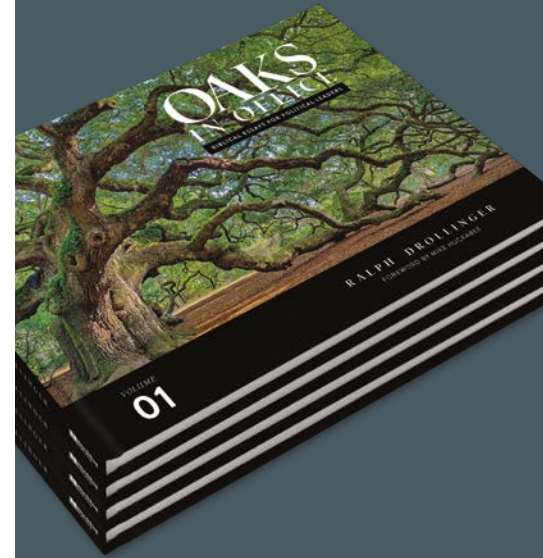
2 TIMOTHY 3:16

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 “inspired” the writers of His Word. Therefore, Scripture is a reliable foundation from which we can reason and is our primary, superior basis for authoritative reasoning.

V. CONCLUSION

The wise public servant must regularly study the Word of God 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. Choose to reason from Scripture rather than rationalize from your mind only.



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in the Political Arena
Throughout the World*



Capitol Ministries® provides Bible studies, evangelism, and discipleship to political leaders. Founded in 1996, we have started ongoing ministries in over forty U.S. state capitols and dozens of foreign federal capitols.

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Yaoundé, Cameroun

1. The Fall of man is known as “The Fall” per Genesis, chapter 3.
2. Man’s inability to reason perfectly without a bias for sin is commonly referred to in theology as the *noetic effect* of sin.
3. S. W. Carruthers, ed., *The Confession of Faith of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster* (London, England: Publishing Office of the Presbyterian Church of England, 1946) Ch. 1, Sec. 6.
4. Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: The Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Meridian Publishing, 1955).
5. **Wisdom** is “the skill of living life for God’s glory.”
6. **Esoteric**: “knowledge that is restricted to a small group” [Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. “esoteric,” accessed February 15, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/esoteric>.]
7. **Epistemology**: “the study or a theory of the nature and grounds of knowledge especially with reference to its limits and validity” [Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. “epistemology,” accessed February 15, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/epistemology>.]