

# In Understanding Be Men

by G.W. North

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding as a fundamental aspect of spiritual excellence, linked to Love and Wisdom.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 4:7, 1 Corinthians 13:2, Ephesians 3:18

**Topics:** "Understanding", "Love in Spiritual Gifts"

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## Description

G.W. North emphasizes the importance of understanding in the Christian life, presenting it as a vital component alongside wisdom and knowledge. He highlights that these attributes are rooted in love, which is central to God's nature and the manifestation of spiritual gifts. Understanding is portrayed as a product of love that has been tested through experience, leading to true wisdom. North asserts that love's qualities enable believers to grasp the depth of understanding, which in turn enriches their spiritual journey. Ultimately, he calls for Christians to embody understanding as a reflection of God's love and character.

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## Transcript

In this whole section of scripture under consideration, Paul is most concerned to make plain to us what are 'the principal thing(s)', this is why wisdom is accorded the primary position in the list of gifts. But even so, from an overall reading it becomes clear that in doing this he is actually presenting wisdom as part of something greater still, namely Understanding. Over all the blessings of possessing spiritual gifts, God desires each of His children to be in enjoyment of this most blessed state of spiritual excellence. 'I give you to understand', he says: and again, in understanding be men'.

It is no less than wonderful (even though upon reflection we may agree that it is only to be expected) that the three principal mental attributes of God, namely Understanding, Wisdom and Knowledge, should be grouped together in this connection, for in no other place do we find it so. This mighty trilogy of excellencies is the chiefest glory of Love, which is here placed central to the whole passage, and extolled above all. Without question and by unchallengeable law, Love is at the heart of this whole body of truth. Love is the nature of the person who indwells the Body; our God whose Spirit manifests itself through the gifts is Love, all-wise, all-knowing and all-understanding.

Although it is not included in the list of Spirituals, Understanding is indivisibly linked with Wisdom and Knowledge, and shall be throughout all ages, for by its very nature it is fundamental to both. Although, like Wisdom, it can only be spoken of in an abstract manner, it cannot possibly be of merely academic meaning or interest, because for its very existence it requires the warm personality of Love.

Understanding is the result of Love tried, tested and found strong in all heights and lengths and breadths and depths, infinitely immense and utterly profound. Understanding is Love's flexibility and adaptability: it has that quality of compassionate sympathy which has been wrought out of living and suffering like things with others, enduring the same temptations and persecutions as its fellows. It is the result of application, the fruit of experience, true wealth from the storehouse of consecrated life; Understanding issues into the perfect flower of Wisdom, borne of it from the same root of Love. Being like it, and allied to it, Wisdom appears almost its twin, for Wisdom is a form of Understanding, its distillation, as indeed also is each one of these precious gifts. Each is a particular demonstration of the spiritual understanding stored up in the sweet personality of the Christ Jesus of Love, to be manifested by the Spirit at His will.

Understanding is the stem upon which Wisdom flowers from Love's long-suffering from whence all understanding is gained. Love suffering long without envy, in utter humility in all things, meekly subjecting itself without reserve, issues in experience, which sooner or later finds expression and becomes known as Understanding. As the flower reveals the glorious nature of the root and is the most beautiful expression of its life, so also Wisdom blossoms forth as the beauty of understanding love.

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