

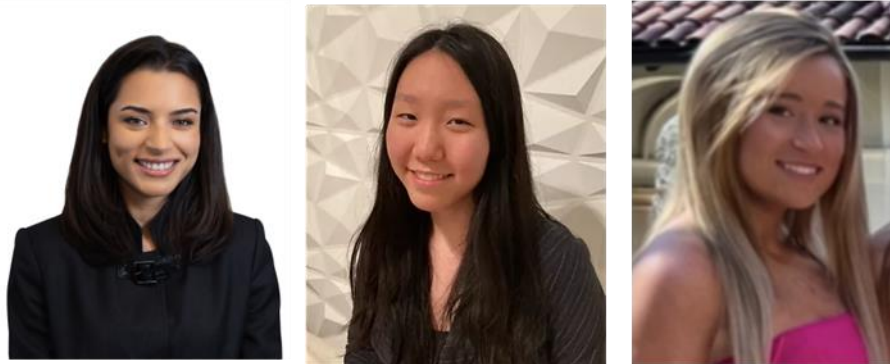


What does WISDOM mean as a fruit of the Spirit – including in the context of work – and what can be done to make it actionable?

The fruits of the Holy Spirit are the signs and actions that the Holy Spirit is alive within us and helping us live by faith in our daily lives.

“What does WISDOM mean as a fruit of the Spirit – including in the context of work – and what can be done to make it actionable?”

This was the focus of the 1st session of the Summer of 2022 at BELIEVES, held on Tuesday, June 14, 2022, featuring an engaging panel discussion with Michaela Pocock, Founder of Teens Reaching Out Through Tunes, and Student Attorney at the Jane W. Wilson Family Justice Clinic; Elly Kang, Co-Founder of American Assimilation Helpline!, Co-Founder of EPICS Ignite!, and Co-Founder of Girls Who Code; and Grace Novascone, Founder of A Touch of Grace Foundation.



Novascone, founder of A Touch of Grace began the session sharing how A Touch of Grace is all about helping women and children.

Speaking of the children, who have often faced a lot of uncertainty in their lives, Novascone said through her foundation she seeks to bring hope to them to help “normalize their growing up.”

Pocock, now a third-year law student at the University of Georgia, spoke next about when she started Teens Reaching Out Through Tunes (T.R.O.T.T.) while in high school.

“I thought it would start out with us going to nursing homes and senior living communities,” said Pocock.

While this did happen, she also began reaching out to schools to let it be community service hours for those needing them, resulting in 40 or so participants engaging in the ministry.

Kang followed Pocock’s remarks, introducing herself and sharing some about her leadership and participation in the STEM organization’s she helped begin – EPICS Ignite! and Girls Who Code – as well as the American Assimilation Helpline!.

“We reach out to low-income, immigrant, refugee, and homeless students weekly to provide free and personalized one-on-one tutoring,” she indicated.

Over the years, she and her team of close to 650 tutors have helped tutor or provide access to resources to 100’s of students on core academic subjects and computer science through the American Assimilation Helpline!

Where did they each get the spark to start and lead what they have?

“I had a debate topic in school where I learned about a refugee family,” Kang answered. “From there, I reached out to my pastor to get connected to the refugee community, and then the ministry formed with other students.”

As for Kang’s involvement and passion for STEM and what she has started related to that, she said, “I was the only girl in my STEM classes.”

Pocock spoke next about the origins of T.R.O.T.T. dating back to when she was in elementary school.

“I started playing violin in the 4th grade. In high school, I was active in my school orchestra and became better from playing more,” she told everyone. “So much so that my mom said, ‘If you’re going to play an instrument, I want you to stick with it.’”

Specific to starting T.R.O.T.T., apparently Pocock talked about it in middle school quite often – to the point where her mother said, “If you’re going to talk about it, do it or stop talking about it.”

And what moved her most when playing violin?

“I would see the reaction I would get playing for my grandma,” Pocock recalled. “I started to realize the impact my violin and music had when I started playing and practicing in front of her. She would just be really touched by me playing anything, honestly, especially if it was a nostalgic song to her.”

Later, as she kept playing and leading T.R.O.T.T., Pocock continued to be touched by the patients she would play for.

“They often couldn’t say anything back to me, but would just show they appreciated my music by tearing up during the song, squeezing or holding my hand afterwards, or gently smiling at me.”

Novascone was similarly moved by an experience that led her to start A Touch of Grace Foundation.

“When I was younger, I volunteered at the Atlanta Children’s Shelter and felt happy from the experience.”

With what Kang, Pocock, and Novascone have each been led to do in mind, how would they each define wisdom?

“Getting more into faith,” said Kang in response to the question. “It is understanding His principles, being more open-minded to the things around us, and seeing these calls to action.”

Pocock added, “In the context of faith, I can’t gain wisdom from a textbook. It’s God’s knowledge and you gain wisdom from saying ‘Yes’ to opportunities. When you say ‘Yes,’ you don’t know where it will take you. You gain a closer relationship with God.”

Novascone also remarked that wisdom is knowledge and “looking around and seeing what’s going on and trying to make things better.”

The panelists were then asked how wisdom has played out in their ministries and organizations as things have evolved.

“It’s really frustrating when you’re forming these things,” Pocock revealed. “A lot of times I’d got to nursing homes by myself. It’d be discouraging but I’d learn. It helped me to persevere.”

Kang and Novascone echoed the challenges of starting things up, with Novascone specifically recalling a Christmas toy drive she organized about 1.5 years ago.

“We only had 20 toys to give, which was very frustrating,” she mentioned. “However, this year, we did a fundraiser which provided for 500 toys.”

In follow-up Kang, Pocock, and Novascone were asked how we as adults can be more wise. This is what they had to say.

“When I got the call from Andrew, I thought, ‘Who am I to be speaking about wisdom to anyone else when I so frequently seek my elders’ wisdom, but now I realize no one person has all the wisdom,’” replied Pocock. “In terms of gaining God’s wisdom, I’d say frequent prayer and asking Him to fulfill God’s purpose in your life.”

Kang then spoke drawing from her experience.

“For me, I started out doing it myself,” she said. “Doing any small thing is better than doing nothing.”

With what they’ve seen and the frustrations they’ve worked through, what have they observed is the biggest struggle for people to live out the wisdom they’ve been able to observe is available from God?

“Cancelling,” Kang replied succinctly.

Novascone then stated, “People are really busy and community service isn’t top of mind.”

Pocock’s thoughts followed along the same lines.

“In the end, I believe you can just believe in yourself. As a teen, I wasn’t as ‘others-focused’ as I’ve grown up to be.”

Pocock also spoke about the importance of one’s reason for engaging that she has observed over the years.

“When people are doing service hours, they’re doing it more for the hours – not a deeper purpose.”

She added, “People think what they’ve got going on is more important.”

In listening to their remarks, one session attendee then noted that by doing the things they’ve done they can gain wisdom, but asked, “How about the other way around?”

Kang responded, “I learn a lot from those around me. They inspire me. You understand them.”

Pocock’s thoughts in response to the question centered first on perseverance, determination, and the leadership and management skills that come about, but then she got more personal.

“It speaks to your core. I always feel this desire to help people.”

They all also spoke about the importance of listening to God in all this.

When asked what prevents listening, Pocock said with little hesitation, “Listening to the wisdom of the world.”

She indicated she feels she’s gaining more of God’s wisdom when she blocks all that out – listening to Him, doing God’s work, and serving others.

Novascone spoke next about one of the things she does daily to listen.

“Every night, 10-15 minutes before bed, I talk to God.”

Adding to her remarks about listening for God, Pocock jumped back in with some more reflections from her time leading T.R.O.T.T.

“Those are your really transformative years,” she emphasized. “T.R.O.T.T. was the wake-up call. It was God keeping me grounded with all that was going on. He was telling me, ‘This is who I created you to be. I want you to always remember I gave you this gift.’”

And when they hear God’s voice, what’s the biggest obstacle to what’s being said to them?

“Getting high numbers,” Novascone said. “A year ago, I expected 20 people to help and had five. Only two were new.”

This year, however, she told the audience there were 50 people who joined in to serve.

Pocock’s answer returned to the core of her definition for wisdom.

“For me, the biggest obstacle is not immediately saying ‘Yes’ to things. I will say ‘Maybe’ now more.”

What goes along with this for her, she explained, is having more positive thoughts versus negative thoughts, and seeing any opportunities as God’s opportunities.

Kang spoke last, expressing her biggest obstacle is doubting, and wondering if it is really feasible and will work.

However, she closed by saying that in the end, “So many relationships form from all of this, and then those people may be the ones that encourage.”