

How the Holy Spirit Imparts Wisdom

by Bayless Conley

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Are you ready for the Word? All right. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we ask You to grant us a spirit of wisdom and illumination in Your Word today. We lean out toward heaven, and we say, Holy Spirit, unveil and reveal the Word of God to these hearts of ours. Cause our eyes to see, our ears to hear, and our hearts to comprehend. And, Father, it is our intent, not just to be diligent listeners, but to be diligent doers of Your Word, to put it into practice. And Jesus, in all things we pray You would be glorified. Amen.

If you have a Bible, there are a couple of places we're going to look at right off the bat. Ecclesiastes 10 and Proverbs 4. Ecclesiastes 10, Proverbs 4. Ecclesiastes 10:10 says,

¹⁰ If the ax is dull, and one does not sharpen the edge, then he must use more strength; but wisdom brings success.

I knew an old man that was a logger. And back in his day, when he was logging, they were actually using an ax, not even a chainsaw, to fell all of the trees that they were working on. And he would carry a file in his back pocket. And when he'd finish chopping down a tree, he would sit on the stump, pull the file out of his back pocket and sharpen the ax. And then he would go onto the next tree. And when that tree was felled, he would sit on the stump, pull out the file, sharpen the ax again. He said, "The other guys in the crew, however, just would go on from tree to tree and exert a lot of energy." He said, "But by the end of the day, I always had produced more than them. They used a lot more effort, a lot more strength, but got a lot less done," he said, "because I took the time to sharpen my ax." Wisdom is that way. There is a lot of wasted motion and wasted effort and sometimes very little results because wisdom is lacking.

Look with me in Proverbs 4, beginning in verse 5, reading through verse 8.

It says (Proverbs 4:5–8),

⁵ Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. ⁶ Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will keep you. ⁷ Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. ⁸ Exalt her, and she will promote you; she will bring you honor, when you embrace her.

Get wisdom. Wisdom is the principal thing. It's above all things, before all things. Wisdom is supreme. The question is, how do you get wisdom? Well, it comes through the Holy Spirit. We've been talking the last few months about the Holy Spirit's ministry in and through the Church. In and through believers like you and like me.

And whatever God gives to us, it always comes through the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1:3 says every blessing is from God. And in the literal language, it means physical, material, spiritual,

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any blessing that comes to us from God comes through the agency of the Holy Spirit. That includes wisdom.

In the book of Isaiah, the Holy Spirit is referred to as the Spirit of wisdom. The question is, how does the Holy Spirit impart the wisdom of God to us as believers? Well, I want to share with you five ways that He does that. You could call this “Five kinds of wisdom.” Number one, we will call it pre-ordained wisdom. Exodus 36, beginning in verse 1 (Exodus 36:1–2). It says,

¹ “And Bezalel and Aholiab, and every gifted artisan in whom the Lord has put wisdom and understanding, to know how to do all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, shall do according to all that the Lord has commanded.”

² Then Moses called Bezalel and Aholiab, and every gifted artisan in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom, everyone whose heart was stirred, to come and do the work.

Now, there are many, many verses that say basically the same thing, but this one will do to put forth the point. It says that God put wisdom in the heart of these artisans to know how to. Did you notice that? He put wisdom in their heart to know how to do the work. It was a pre-ordained wisdom given by God. It was initiated by God.

Some of you have an inborn ability to do and to understand certain things. You just look at a thing, and you can understand it. And other people don't get it, but you get it. You look at something, and it's like, “Well, of course, that's so simple.” And the rest of us are scratching our heads, thinking, “That's impossible.”

Every person has an inborn ability, an inborn wisdom towards certain things. It may have to do with things mechanical. It may have to do with managing people. It may have to do with writing or creating music.

In Scripture, it speaks often of both men and women artisans that were given wisdom from God in their hearts to know how to make beautiful garments, how to work with wood and precious gems and with silver and with other precious metals, with gold, and how to create beautiful architecture.

In the book of Ezra, it even speaks of those that have a God-given wisdom to govern as public servants, as public officials, civil servants. Even in the book of Isaiah, it speaks of farmers being given this inborn wisdom to know how to farm. And if you think farming is easy, you've never done it.

My father-in-law was a farmer. Several of my brothers-in-laws were farmers. My grandfather was a cattle rancher. It is not an easy thing. In fact, listen to these verses. This is from Isaiah 28:26 and then 29. It says,

²⁶ The farmer knows just what to do, for God has given him understanding.

²⁹ The Lord Almighty is a wonderful teacher, and he gives the farmer great wisdom.

I am asked often because I tend to do a lot of minister's things and have throughout the years where a group of pastors will gather or young ministers, and I'm often asked, “How do you put a sermon together?” To which I answer, “I'm not sure.” And that's the truth of the matter. I'm not sure. Now, I can tell them how I study. I'll read a chapter over and over and meditate and think

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about it, but how it comes together, I just see it. I don't know. It's just it was a pre-ordained wisdom that God deposited in my heart.

And certainly still, as well as all of the other arenas that were mentioned and those that weren't, that deposit of wisdom still needs to be cultivated and developed. But the truth of the matter, if it is there, God's wisdom to know how to, it is there. And if it's not there, it's not there. If it's not there, you may learn how to do something, but you will never have a creative intuition concerning your work, and you will never excel.

Some people are like a square peg trying to fit into a round hole. It's not that they're lazy. It's not that they have a bad attitude. It's just that they don't have a creative intuitiveness for the field they are laboring in. They can't see what needs to be done. They may be able to maintain something, but they can't grow it. They don't possess the creative insight of pre-ordained wisdom.

And sometimes, a manager or a leader in an organization, be it a ministry, another corporation, may have to move someone to another position or may have to remove them for the benefit of the ministry or that corporation and for the benefit of that individual. Because if they're working in a place because they're secure, but it's not something that they've got this creative intuition for, this inborn wisdom for, they will never fulfill the will of God for their life.

It's important to consider that.

I have an acquaintance. And really, he's not more than that. We would recognize one another and probably sit down and have a coffee, but the relationship has never gone beyond that. He started a corporation that just kind of went through the roof. It just excelled. Within a few short years, he had a couple of hundred employees. And one of the guys in a key position just didn't have that X factor. I never said anything, but I realized, I thought, "Why is this guy here? He's a good guy. He's a sweet guy, but he's never going to grow this arena that he's over. It just won't happen with him." And it wasn't because he had a bad attitude. He wasn't lazy. He just didn't have that thing.

And the acquaintance of mine recognized it, and actually, they were friends, both believers. He called him up one day and said, "Can I talk to you." He came over to his house and said, "Look, we got to talk. I've been praying, and I feel like your season here at the company is done." He said, "You mean you're firing me?" He says, "Well, actually, yes, I'm going to let you go." He went into a tailspin. Felt like he'd been judged and found wanting. He went through all those emotions that we go through when we're fired. It's not an easy thing, regardless of what the position might be. And it was a very difficult thing for him.

But then I heard that guy, later on, I heard from his own mouth. He actually was in another state, came here to California, started a corporation of his own, was different, and was absolutely flourishing. And I heard him say that when my friend let me go, he said it was the hardest thing I ever went through. He got more than an adequate salary. He was comfortable and probably never would have ventured out. He said, but it was also the best thing that ever happened to me. He said I'm flourishing now. He said I'm in the middle of God's will for my life, and this is what I was made to do.

It takes courage to launch out from the shore.

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I was reading an article just this last week, and the author was actually writing about himself. He was a good writer because he had me by line one. And normally, I don't read stuff like this, but I just kept going. And he talked about the fact that he was working in a bookshop. And he was quite happy, made an adequate salary, could pay the rent, et cetera. It was walking distance from his apartment. He had several friends that worked there, so it was fun to go to work. And he got fired. He actually got in an argument with the day manager of the bookshop regarding the loop of music that they played constantly in there. He didn't like it and kind of went out of bounds in his complaints and got fired for it.

And he made the same statement. He said, "It was hard, but it was the best thing that ever happened to me." He had been writing on the side. He said, "I went out that day, and I put my full energy into getting a new job." And he says, "I landed my first professional writing job at three times the salary I was making at the bookshop." And he went on to be a prolific writer, still writing for magazines across the country. And I found his words very impactful. He had this God-given, this God-ordained, pre-ordained wisdom to be able to think through things and put them on paper. Not everyone can do that.

You have a pre-ordained wisdom for something.

And then, we come to the second type of wisdom. We'll call this imparted wisdom.

Deuteronomy 34:9. It says,

⁹ Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Again, this was God-initiated. It wasn't Joshua coming and saying, "Look, lay hands on me because I want your mantle, Moses."

It has happened to me numerous times throughout the year. Sometimes, people I don't even know will come up and say, "Pastor, I want you to lay hands on me because I want your anointing." It doesn't work that way. I'm going to say that again. It doesn't work that way.

Now, I do believe in an imparted wisdom, but if you read the story and if you cross-reference it in Numbers 27, God was the one that pointed Joshua out to Moses, and God instructed Moses to lay hands on Joshua. It was God-initiated.

Even if you look at stories like Elisha and Elijah, Elisha ended up with a double portion of Elijah's anointing. His mantle came upon him, but it was God-initiated. God was the one that set it up. God was the one that did the instructions.

And that's important because I think in the church today, we've got a lot of empty hands being laid on empty heads.

Again, I believe in imparted wisdom. I believe it is scriptural, but it needs to be God-inspired and God-initiated.

And did you notice it wasn't Joshua saying, "Well, Moses, God spoke to me to come to you, and I feel like God's telling me to tell you to lay hands on me so that I can get a spirit of wisdom." No, it was God speaking to Moses about Joshua.

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And I know some are thinking, “Well, look, if God has to initiate things, then what do I do? Do I just wait and hope?” Well, actually, that brings us to the third kind of wisdom, and that is God’s spoken wisdom or God’s Word. God’s spoken wisdom. Deuteronomy 4:5–6, it says,

⁵ “Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. ⁶ Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’”

Paul wrote to young Timothy, 2 Timothy 3:15. It says,

¹⁵ and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

“From childhood you’ve known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise.” The Holy Scriptures are able to make you wise.

Last week, I had a friend call me up. He’s a worship leader. Just in the conversation, he said, “Bayless, you know the finest moments of my life, the moments I look to more than any others, are when I’m by myself worshipping God, and I meet with God.” And then he said, “What about you, (*momento sagrados*) your holy moments, what are they?”

I said, “Well, I like to worship, but it’s not when I worship.” I said, “For me, it’s when I’m sitting by myself at my kitchen table with my Bible open, and I’m reading slowly and prayerfully, and the Holy Spirit begins to show me things. He begins to speak to me from the Scriptures, begins to impart wisdom to me, I get illumination. Those are the moments that I look forward to more than any other moments in the world.”

My friend, if you want wisdom, take a look in the Book. Have a love affair with your Bible. The Holy Spirit will speak to you through it. The Scriptures are able to make you wise. This is your wisdom in this fallen world that we are walking through. Search the Scriptures before you make important decisions.

When I was an assistant pastor, I had a guy; I had been to his home. I knew him. He was a member of the church. He rang me up and said, “Bayless, can we talk?” I said, “Sure, sure. Come on over.” So Janet was out, and I had him come to the apartment and meet me. And I remember I sat down on the couch, and he sat on the chair next to me. And I said, “What’s up?” He said, “Well, I got this issue at work.” And it was a pretty severe thing going on.

He said, “It’s actually bubbling over into my marriage, and it’s affecting my marriage. So I got problems at work, and it’s affected my marriage as well, and I just don’t know what to do.” And wouldn’t you know it? That morning, I had been reading in the Gospels, and I had been poring over this parable, and I thought of it immediately. It sounded exactly like what he just said he was going through. I said, “Let me show you something. This is going to trip you out.”

So I opened the Bible, and I kind of scooted to the edge of the couch, and I put it in his lap. And I pulled out the parable and said, “Okay, I want you to read from here to here.” And he read it and his face just went, “Whoa.” He said, “That sounds exactly like what I just told you.” I said,

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“Doesn’t it? That’s just exactly what you said is going on at work and your problems right there.” He said, “It is. Wow.”

I said, “Look, it gets better.” I said, “Now, read from here to here.” And he read from there to there and said, “That’s what Jesus says to do. That’s the answer. If you do that, it’ll solve this.” And he read the second part, and his countenance fell. I said, “That’s what you need to do.” I said, “Do you see it?” He said, “Yes.” And I’ll never forget, he closed the Bible, and he stood up. He said, “I didn’t come all the way over here to listen to that.” And he marched out, slammed the screen door of our apartment, jumped on his motorcycle, and rode off about 80 miles an hour through the parking lot. He lost his job and he lost his marriage.

Jeremiah 8:9 says,

⁹ Behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord; so what wisdom do they have?

Listen, if you’re in the middle of a marriage crisis, there’s wisdom for you in the Book. If you’re in the middle of a crisis in your business, there’s wisdom for you in the Book. The Holy Spirit will talk to you. If you’re in the middle of a health crisis, there’s wisdom for you in the Book. If there’s some other thing going on with your kids, there’s wisdom for you in the Book. If you are in legal trouble, there is wisdom for you in the Book. And God won’t withhold it from you. The Bible says wisdom is laid up for the righteous, not from the righteous. He’s laid up wisdom for you. Spend some time in the Book, and God will speak to you.

And then next, number four, we come to the counselor’s wisdom. And I want to read a number of verses to you from the book of Proverbs, beginning in Proverbs 12:15. It says,

¹⁵ The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.

Proverbs 13:20,

²⁰ He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed.

Proverbs 24:6,

⁶ For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, and in a multitude of counselors there is safety.

I was here Thursday for some things on campus in a staff prayer meeting. And about a half hour before the staff prayer meeting, I went over to Building B. And all of the young people had gotten back from summer camp. It was like an anthill over there, just everywhere. A lot of noise, a lot of excitement, and people are talking. And I’m greeting the kids and talking to different kids.

And there was a group of girls standing there, and I said, “Hey, girls. Did any of you have any God moments at camp?” There were four of them standing there. All four of them did, and they shared. One, I thought she was going to start crying, talked about this God moment she had. She was actually filled with the Holy Spirit. And another one shared this God moment that was similar. The third one shared. And the fourth one said, “I had a God moment as well, but it wasn’t like theirs.” She said, “I felt like God spoke to me through the counselors at camp.” I thought to myself, “That’s brilliant.” She recognized God speaking to her through the counselors.

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Listen, the man or woman that will only listen to themselves has a fool for a counselor.

Probably 25 years ago, close to that, I was down in Mexico City doing some ministry, and I was staying with Wayne Myers. Wayne Myers is the grandfather of Bethany, Pastor Harrison's wife. He moved down to Mexico some 70-something years ago, and he will turn a hundred in just a few days.

He went down there having empty pockets and not knowing one word of Spanish because God sent him to go by himself. He wasn't married. A single guy; went down there, and God has used him in the last 70-something years down there. He has built 7,000 churches. I'm not making that up. And he was actively engaged in ministry until just, I think, before his 99th birthday, he was still going out and preaching.

Anyway, I'm standing there with Wayne, and we've got a critical thing going on back here. We didn't have mobile phones. So I would have to get on a landline and see if I could get through. And we were engaged in buying a piece of property not too far from here. As I recall, it was 12 acres. And the owners were kind of really pushing hard. They said, "Look; if you don't sign now on the dotted line, the deal is going away. We've got some other people that want it." And so I'm trying to get back and forth via landline down there. And they're saying, "Look, you do this today, or the deal is gone."

And so, do I get the general manager to go sign on behalf of the church on these 12 acres? And I was, I don't know, something was bothering me about it. And so, I said, "Wayne, I've got to talk to you." And I explained to him the deal and the pressure that was there and that what I was praying and what I was sensing. And Wayne shared something with me that just sort of went off inside of me, that helped me recognize what God was already saying to me.

And so, I actually called, I said, "Tell them the deal is off." I can honestly tell you if not for the counsel that I got from Wayne Myers that day, we probably would not be sitting here in this auditorium. We wouldn't have this campus, wouldn't be on this property. It was critical. And God brought that wisdom through a godly counselor.

I think, on the other hand, years ago, I was on a board of a particular ministry, a very large ministry. And they were going to bring a guy on to be over the finances and stuff. And he came highly recommended by a famous minister. But as we were sitting there in the board meeting and he's talking about this guy that he's going to bring on, I felt like, in my heart, somebody was dragging fingernails across a chalkboard every time they'd talk about this guy.

I said, "Look, I don't know the guy personally. I've heard his name, but it doesn't feel right to me. It's plowing my field crossways in my heart." And then one of the other board members spoke up and said, "You know what, I feel the same way that Bayless does. I've got a real sincere hesitation in my heart about this." And the pastor, the leader of the church and ministry, said, "Well, it's funny, I had another friend tell me the same thing that you guys are saying."

So he's got three witnesses there, and that's our job as board members to give counsel. It's not our job to make the decision. That's his job. He's going to be responsible before God, just like you are. I know some of you, you want someone else to decide for you, but you need to make some decisions yourself. And he decided, he said, "Well, this famous guy said I need to get him and a lot of people want him. And if I don't grab him quickly, he's going to be gone."

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And so, he hired the guy. And over the next 18 months, this guy caused so much grief for that ministry and literally cost them several million dollars with foolish decisions that he made on behalf of the ministry. I wish that our friend had listened.

God will put godly friends in your life that will tell you what they think and what they feel. And again, you have to make the final decision. All right? You can't blame anybody else. But that's what a counselor does. And sometimes just some good old-fashioned common sense is worth its weight in gold. Oh, it's true.

All right. Number five. Petitioned wisdom.

James 1:5,

⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

If any of you lacks wisdom, anyone, ask God. The word "lacks" is actually the Greek word that was used in the ancient world. That was a banking term, and it meant to be overdrawn that you don't have sufficient funds in your account to pay for what you're trying to buy.

So if you don't have sufficient wisdom in your heart to deal with whatever you need to deal with, ask God, and He will give it to you liberally. Your account will overflow. You'll have more than enough wisdom to make whatever decision you need, and God is not going to find fault. He won't bring reproach.

He's not going to cross His arms and say, "I can't believe you don't know that. How long have you been a Christian? How long have you been sitting in that church? Do you never listen when the preacher preaches?"

Don't you know that they just covered that last week?" No, He won't reproach you.

God will give you wisdom if you ask. He'll give you wisdom for your children, wisdom for your marriage, wisdom for your finances, wisdom in your pursuit of a healthier body, wisdom in your legal troubles. Whatever it might happen to be, He will give wisdom to every single person that asks.

And the context is when you're in the middle of a trial. If you back up a few verses, it said, "Whenever you fall into various trials, count it all joy." And then, in the context, "I'm in a trial. I can't see the forest for the trees. I don't know what to do." God says, "Ask for wisdom, and I'll give it to you. I'll show you what to do. I'll give you the steps you need to take."

So listen. If you are in a trial today, if you're in the midst of a tempest today, God has promised to give you wisdom if you will ask Him.

Someone says, "How will He make it known?" Well, anyway He chooses to, obviously, but probably through some of the ways we've spoken of. Through His Word. Maybe by the Holy Spirit speaking directly to you. Jesus said, "When the Spirit comes, He will speak. He will show you things to come. He will guide you into all truth." Maybe through the counsel of others. Maybe He'll give you a dream. God's given me wisdom a number of times in my life through dreams. Or maybe the Umpire of peace will make a call.

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Proverbs 3:17 says of wisdom,

¹⁷ Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

Of wisdom, all of wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. All her ways are pleasantness. All her paths are peace.

The Hebrew word for "pleasantness" literally means to be polished smooth. As opposed to having a rough edge. Something that's going to scrape you or scratch you. All of wisdom's ways are pleasantness. They're polished smooth.

Back to my reference to being in Mexico talking to Wayne Myers. When I went to Wayne, I said, "Wayne," I said, "As I prayed about this . . ." And this wasn't just I threw up a quick prayer and said, "Oh God, speak to me." I spent time on my knees waiting on God, getting quiet and praying and leaning out, and spending time. And so I did that, and as I rolled things around inside of me, something was scratching me inside. It's the only way I can describe it.

It wasn't this polished smooth. Just something kept scratching me. It's like, you ever put a pair of socks on, you put the socks on, and you go, "Ouch." And there's a foxtail in there. You know, those stickers? Like, "All right, I can wear the socks, but it's going to scratch me every step I take." And so what do you do? You take the sock off, and you get that foxtail out. And it's like as I'm praying about it, I got this foxtail in my heart. Something's scratching me.

And I recognized through Wayne talking to me and sharing with me that that was actually the Holy Spirit making a call. That's why I had that inward hesitation.

Colossians 3:15, the Amplified Bible says, "And let the peace of God act as an umpire continually, deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your mind." I'm going to say that again. Let the peace of God act as an umpire continually in your heart, deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your mind. Colossians 3:15 from the Amplified.

Now, what does an umpire do? Umpire says, "All right, that's out of bounds. That's fair territory." So as I'm praying and I'm waiting on God, literally putting the time in, as I lean towards doing this thing, something's scratching me. Something's not right. I've got this inward hesitation. The Umpire's making a call. Says, "That's out of bounds for you. Stop going that way."

But, if as I pray and as I wait on God, and as I put the time in and get quiet, and I search through Scriptures, and I wait on God, as I lean that way, I got peace inside. I still may have doubts assailing my mind, but I've learned to distinguish my heart from my head. And I've got peace the Umpire's making a call. I make the biggest decisions in my life based on peace in my heart.

Now, with your mind, you contact the intellectual realm. With your body, you contact the physical realm. With your spirit, with your heart, you contact the spirit realm. And the part of you that God talks to is your spirit. Not your mind, not your physical senses or your feelings. "God is a Spirit," Jesus said. When God speaks to you, He speaks to you through your spirit.

The Bible says in the book of Romans, "The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit." Not with our intellect, not with our feelings, with our spirit. Now eventually, it'll make its way to your intellect. But when God speaks, He speaks to your spirit. And sometimes, it takes a little while being quiet just to locate your own heart.

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As you know, King David said this. He said, "I commune with my own heart upon my bed, and I'm still." Some of you, your own heart is a great stranger to you because you're so busy, so noisy, so much motion going on. "Be still and know that I am God," the Scripture says. He will speak to you in those moments, and He will give you wisdom.

Let me give you just a couple closing thoughts. All right. Once you get wisdom, number one, be patient, once you get wisdom. Jesus said "Wisdom is justified by her children." It's an interesting statement. Wisdom is justified by her children. In other words, wisdom is proved to be wisdom by the fruit it produces. What wisdom produces is its own vindication. What you're doing or proposing to do, some people may think you're crazy, but if it produces fruit, it'll be shown to be wisdom in the end. But sometimes, you have to be patient.

I was an assistant pastor for a couple of years. And I met the guy. I was doing missions work down in Mexico. And I met this guy. He asked me to come be part of his staff. Eventually, I did. I said, "But, with this caveat. My wife and I, we're going to start a church. God's put into my heart we're going to start our own church. And I'll come on staff with you. My heart and soul, I'll give you my everything, but the time will come that we will leave, and I'll start a church." He said, "I already know it, and that's fine. You can come with that understanding." So we did.

And the last few months we were there, my wife and I, our hearts were being stirred, and we recognized God was getting us ready. The time was coming. And I'm sitting on a Sunday morning just like you are now. I got my notebook, I'm taking notes, got my Bible open. The pastor is preaching. Right in the middle of his sermon, the Holy Spirit spoke words to me. I heard it as clear as anything I've ever heard. He said, "It's time to go." I drew a little alarm clock on my notes, and I wrote, "It's time to go," in bold letters underneath.

The service gets done. People are milling around. I go to the pastor and said, "I got to tell you something." He says, "I got to tell you something first." He said, "Right in the middle of my message, while I was preaching, the Holy Spirit said it's time for you to go." I turned my notebook around, showed him my alarm clock and what I had written. He said, "Yes. Okay."

Anyway, we start making plans to come and start Cottonwood Church. And I had a couple of dear friends. I really loved them. They really loved me and said, "Bayless, we got to talk to you." I said, "Okay." So they pulled me aside and said, "We know you're planning on going and starting a church. We just want to tell you, this is the word of the Lord; it's not God's will."

I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, we know you're going to start a church. It's just not God's will you do it now? You're supposed to stay with us two more years. You got to stay two years. We're telling you by the Holy Spirit." I said, "Well, you know what? I appreciate you guys trying to help me. And I love you, and I respect you, but God's already spoken to my wife and I. He's already confirmed it, so thanks but no thanks." Well, that was 40 years ago. I think wisdom has been justified by her children. I think wisdom has shown that they were wrong. And I think we were a little closer to the bull's eye on that one.

So number one, you got to be patient once you get wisdom. And then number two, this is so important. You need to be protective. And that is protective of your own heart.

I want to read you some of the most intriguing verses in Scripture. It's from Ezekiel 28. And it actually speaks about Lucifer, this beautiful angel that God made who fell and became Satan.

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And these verses tell us how a beautiful angel named Lucifer became the devil. Ezekiel 28, I'm going to begin reading in verse 13, and this is from the New Living translation. God is speaking.

He says (Ezekiel 28:13–17),

¹³ You were in Eden, the garden of God. Your clothing was adorned with every precious stone—red carnelian, chrysolite, white moonstone, beryl, onyx, jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald—all beautifully crafted for you and set in the finest gold. They were given to you on the day you were created.

¹⁴ I ordained and anointed you as the mighty angelic guardian. You had access to the holy mountain of God and walked among the stones of fire.

¹⁵ “You were blameless in all you did from the day you were created until the day evil was found in you.

¹⁶ Your great wealth filled you with violence, and you sinned. So I banished you from the mountain of God. I expelled you, O mighty guardian, from your place among the stones of fire.

¹⁷ Your heart was filled with pride because of all your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth and exposed you to the curious gaze of kings.

“Your heart was filled with pride because of your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.”

The Message Bible says, “You corrupted wisdom by using it to get worldly fame.”

Listen to me. Pride, vanity, and the love of money can cause you to corrupt your wisdom. A God-given insight and intuition can become cunning when it's corrupted. A God-given wisdom to influence people and to move them toward God can be twisted into manipulation when it's corrupted. That's what happened to the devil's wisdom. Guard your heart. Check your motives.

I have known and seen some people that had a God-given wisdom and gifting to raise support for the kingdom of God, but I've seen them corrupt that wisdom. Not that they no longer raise support, they still raise huge sums of money, but it's no longer for King Jesus. It's about them now. The motives are no longer pure.

I have observed people that have a God-given gift and a wisdom through their singing, through their speaking to move a crowd toward God. But now, it's no longer about bringing glory to God. It's about worldly fame. And the engine that drives their endeavors is called ego. They still got the gift. They still have what God put in them, but it's been twisted. It's been corrupted.

So be protective and make sure your motives are pure and that the end you're trying to achieve are consistent with what God wants. Because in one way or another, everything that He gifts us with should translate into God receiving glory and His kingdom moving forward. Whatever field of labor that you're working in that should be the end. That should be the height and the goal that we're working toward. But the good news is you can find wisdom. The Holy Spirit is ready today to impart wisdom, and you can keep it pure.

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You can.

Is there anybody in the house, for anything, maybe with your kids, your marriage, your job, your future, whatever, any of you need wisdom? Let's see your hand if you are here and you need wisdom right now. You really would like to hear from God. "Okay, God, what's the next step? What do I do? What direction do I take?" A lot of people. How about outside on the Plaza?

All right. Why don't we pray? And I'm going to kneel down and pray, but let's let our hearts go up to God. He promised if we lack wisdom that He'd give it to us if we asked Him. Talk about a holy moment. Heaven is ready to pour wisdom out and to pour it out liberally if we'll ask with a sincere heart and a believing heart. Let's go before Him.

Heavenly Father, we come in the name of Jesus and because You said to come. You said to come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in our time of need. So, Father, we're coming. We're coming because the blood of Jesus makes us worthy. We're coming because You've invited us and because You've made a promise. You promised that if we asked for wisdom, You would give it liberally. So, Father, we ask You for wisdom now.

Lord, I pray for the single mother that's struggling to make ends meet. She wants to be a good mom to her kids, but she's tired inside and out. I ask You to give her wisdom. I pray that You'd give the young businessman wisdom. Father, I pray that You'd give the teenager that's thinking about her future wisdom. Lord, for every petition that's rising up to You, I thank You that there is grace and wisdom, and understanding being poured out. Now, just go ahead and ask God. Ask Him to give you wisdom. Let your lips form the words. Talk to Him. Lord, we ask. Thank You for Your wisdom. Thank You, O God. In Jesus' name. Thank You, O God. Praise You, Jesus. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Go ahead and look up this way if you would. I believe that wisdom has been dispatched. And the thing with God is the only thing that can please Him is faith. Without faith, it's impossible to please Him. So whatever we do has to be mixed with faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. You may not feel any different, but you need to believe that God heard your prayer.

He's going to make that wisdom known to you. He will make it known, and you'll be able to recognize it. If you couldn't recognize it, God would not be fair. Would He? No. He speaks the secret language of your heart, and He'll make it known.

I'd like to give an invitation to you if I could. I often think about this. I have my wife sitting on the front row, Janet and I have been married 40 years, and we're very different in a lot of areas.

As a young kid, I started having problems with alcohol when I was 13, and it escalated and didn't get better for a long, long time. When I was 16, I got introduced to drugs, and I went on a very deep downward spiral. And for a lot of years, I was not sober and getting into all kinds of trouble. And you might find it hard to understand. People probably wouldn't have suspected it, but honestly, I was looking for God.

My mother thought when I was a little boy; she thought I was going to become a priest because when I was three years old, I'd asked her questions about God all the time. She didn't have answers. She said, "I'd have to go to the priest at the Catholic church and ask him the questions

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you asked me when you were three because I didn't have answers." So she was sure I'd become a priest. But it kind of didn't look like it was going that way, says Tom, who was a Catholic priest for 19 years.

Until one day, in a park, a 12-year-old boy told me about Jesus. Nobody had ever shared the gospel with me until he did that day in the park. And the night before, I had done an excess of drugs and almost died. I was in a very dark place that day the little boy talked to me. Through a sequence of events, I ended up in a street mission where I got saved. And I was the only one that came forward that night at that little street mission. And a bunch of believers got around me. They laid hands on me. And I honestly don't remember what they prayed. I was crying so hard I couldn't hear anything. But I do know a bunch of them had their hands on me, and they were praying kind of loud. But from that night, 46 years ago, whatever it was, 47, I've not had any illegal drug in my body for the last 47 years. Something broke off of my life that night.

But I look at Janet; I married Ms. Goody Two-Shoes. It's just a fact. This woman has never even smoked one cigarette in her whole life. She like graduated number one in her college and just always the teacher's favorite student. And God just has a sense of humor putting someone together. Me and her, it's just weird, but it really works.

But one day, she realized she's just as lost as somebody like a Bayless Conley because it's not through our good works, our good deeds, our personal effort that we're saved. It's by the grace of God. We've all sinned and come short of the glory of God. And so, when we couldn't reach up to God, we couldn't fix our inward problem ourselves. God sent His Son down to us, lived a sinless life, and then was crucified. And there on the cross suspended between heaven and earth, the sky turns dark, and God pours out His punishment against the sin of the world, but He pours it out on His Son instead of on us.

He became our substitute, and He died under the weight of our sins. After three days and three nights, the claims of God's eternal justice were satisfied. Jesus was raised from the dead, and the Bible says if you'll believe that, and if you'll confess Him as your Lord, make Him the boss of your life, God brings you into a relationship called salvation.

So here's the thing. It's like one side you've got God, the other side you've got the devil. You've got relationship with God; separation from God. Heaven; hell. Which would be the wise choice to make? We're talking about wisdom today. What do you think?

In Deuteronomy, God said, "Look, I set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Make a choice." And then, a couple of verses later, God said, "Just in case you're not quite intelligent enough, choose life. It's really the better choice." And He says this, "Choose life that both you and your seed may live." It'll affect you and your children and your children's children.

I'm first generation Christian. There's no one saved in my family. I never heard the gospel. My sister got saved, then my mom got saved, and then my dad got saved. Dad and mom are in heaven now. But I look at my kids, and they love God. And I look at my grandkids, and they all know Jesus. Choose life that you and your seed may live.

Some of you in here you've had a bad generational thing going on in your family. You can put a stop to it. And you can bring life and blessing to your family if you'll choose, if you'll choose.

Now I'm going to do something. I hope you guys are hanging on out on plaza. I'm just going to count to three. And if you want to make a choice for Jesus, maybe you've never done it. I'm

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going to count to three. When I do, I'm going to ask you to stand up, and then the rest of us will stand up with you, and I'll lead a prayer. And it's going to be every head up, every eye open, so yes, people will see you.

But, I'd ask you to do that because I think it'll help you. Sometimes we want to be a secret agent Christian. Like, "I want to serve Christ, but I don't want anyone to know." We're afraid of what people think. The Bible says in Proverbs, "The fear of man brings a snare." It binds us up. And I think even just something as simple as taking a stance and say, "Look, if the whole world wants to watch, I don't care. I care more about what God thinks." It's a way to honor God, and it'll break the chains of the fear of man over you. It's a wonderful thing.

And to the backsliders in the house, this invitation is for you as well. First-time people, backsliders, prodigal daughter, it's time to come home. It's time to come home. God's calling you. You know He is. Prodigal son, it's time for you to come home. It's time for you to come home. Come back to the Father's house. Get your heart in the right place.

Somebody says, "But, pastor, I'm going to have to make some hard decisions." You probably will, but oh, it's worth it. Life is too short. Eternity is too long. Heaven is too real, and hell is too hot not to live for God.

So again, I'll count to three. You can stand up, then everyone will stand with you a second after that, and we'll pray. One, you're ready? Two, do you want to get in this prayer? Stand up. Three. Out in the plaza as well, stand on your feet. All in here, stand up. Come on. It's awesome. Yeah, we love it. All up in the back, yeah. Fantastic. All right, everybody, stand up with them. Just stand up with them.

And listen, if you're watching this in a pub in Ireland, stand up. If you're sitting on the edge of your bed in Peru, stand up. Go ahead and stand up. We're going to pray a prayer. I'll give you the words for it. Put a hand on your heart. Let's pray. Just say,

O God, I come to You. With all know my heart, I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Jesus, come into my life. I believe You paid for my sins and that You were raised from the dead. And from this moment onward, I will serve You, Jesus. I ask You to be the Shepherd of my life. All I am and all I have, I place in the hands of Jesus today. Amen." Amen. Amen Fantastic. So good.

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