# message **TRANSCRIPT**



# **Hear and Be Wise**

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I want you to open to the book of Proverbs. I'm going to share a short, and you realize that is a relative term, message with you from the book of Proverbs 1:5. Let's pray first.

Heavenly Father, give us understanding. We give You our undivided attention. We lean out, and we listen. These hearts of ours are Yours to inscribe upon. Bring comfort. Bring correction. Bring encouragement. Bring what we need, Lord. May Your name be glorified, amen.

Proverbs 1:5 NKJV says,

<sup>5</sup> A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel.

Now, that is one of the main attributes of a wise person found throughout the book of Proverbs. They have an open mind and an open heart. They will listen. They will consider. They will investigate. They will learn. Where on the other side of the coin, the fool will not hear. A fool is, according to Proverbs, only interested in their own perspective. A fool is only interested in his or her own opinion. They will not hear. A fool's mind is a lot like cement, thoroughly mixed and well set. A wise person will hear; a fool will not. I want to read you some verses from Proverbs 2 to give you an idea of what God is talking about when He says to hear and to go after His wisdom. Proverbs 2:1–7 NKJV,

<sup>1</sup> My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, <sup>2</sup> so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; <sup>3</sup> yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, <sup>4</sup> if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; <sup>5</sup> then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. <sup>6</sup> For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; <sup>7</sup> He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly.

Notice it said that God has stored up sound wisdom for the upright. He's not hiding it from us. He stored it up for us. If we will search for wisdom, if we will listen, if we will go after it, the Lord will give wisdom. He will give us the wisdom that He has stored up for us. When He does, it's always a word in due season. The fruit of hearing His wisdom and acting upon it is varied. You can find all these things in Proverbs. Part of the fruit of that is joy. Another fruit that comes from it is having a blessed family. Safety, health, prosperity, promotion, all of those things come from listening to and following God's wisdom.

Now, whatever you're facing right now hasn't taken God by surprise. He has wisdom laid up for you. If you just found out that your spouse has been unfaithful and you're shattered, He's laid up wisdom for you. If you're in between jobs, He has wisdom laid up for you. If you're battling temptation, He has wisdom laid up for you. If your son or daughter has just come to you and announced something about their sexuality that's rocked your world because you didn't see it

coming, God has wisdom laid up for you. If you have challenges in your business, God has wisdom laid up for you. He will give you that wisdom.

If you grapple with fear or depression, God has wisdom for you. He has a pathway for you to walk. Maybe you just have an idea or a dream, and you don't even know how to get started. Listen, God knows. He sees you and He has wisdom laid up for you. If you will listen to it and act upon it, it will bring you through. As it's bringing you through, it will also bring great temporal and eternal blessings into your life. Again, the main key is we must listen to His wisdom. We must hear it. I've made this message really simple. It's just four things. If you listen to them, you will find wisdom in them. I've made it an acrostic, so it's pretty simple. Wise, W-I-S-E. Four things that if we will listen to them, we'll find God's wisdom in them. Number one is W. We need to listen to His Word. We need to listen to God's Word. I want to read again Proverbs 2:1–2 NKJV.

<sup>1</sup> My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, <sup>2</sup> so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding. . .

God gives wisdom to us through His Word. When Moses stood before the children of Israel, God had given Moses commandments and statutes. He'd given Moses His Word. Moses gave it to the people. This is what Moses said to them. Deuteronomy 4:5–6 NKJV.

<sup>5</sup> "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. <sup>6</sup> 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.' "

Moses said, "Listen. Pay attention to this Word. This Word that I've given you from God is your wisdom." In Luke 11:49, Jesus declared that the written Word of God was the wisdom of God. I had a man come to me years ago. He'd been attending the church for a while. I'd met him a few times. I had just short interactions with him. He said, "Look, may I talk to you?" So, I said, "Yeah." He came into the office and sat down. He was distraught. He's got a pretty major issue going on, and he's talking about it. He says, "Pastor, I begged God to talk to me. I've pleaded with God over and over to talk to me. He's not saying anything to me, and I don't know what to do."

Now, I was quite surprised because of the question he had; the issue was something that was addressed at least four or five times in different places in the New Testament. It was really, really clear. He said, "God's not talking to me. I've pleaded and pleaded with God." So, I asked him, "I don't want to be offensive, but do you have a Bible?" He said, "Of course, I have a Bible." I said, "Do you read it?" He said, "Well, actually, no. I don't." I said, "Okay." I went and got a New Testament off the shelf. I opened it up, and we went to probably three different references that talked exactly about the questions he had. God said very clearly how to respond to it and what to do. I said, "What do you think of that?" He said, "It looks like God's already said something about my issue, hasn't He?" I said, "Actually, yes. He has."

Imagine you started a company, and it's going great. It's firing on all cylinders. It is so productive. It's helping people. The employees are being blessed. You're being blessed, and you're going to take an extended trip. Before you go, you write a very thorough handbook about anything that could come up, anything at all. You talk about the vendors you need to use, the maintenance for all the machinery, what to do if there's conflict among the employees, and what

to do if this happens or that happens. You talk about everything that's provided and everything that's expected. It is thorough, and it covers everything. So, you gather several of the leaders together and give them each a copy of that handbook. You say, "I'm going to take an extended trip. Here, this will tell you what to do." You go on the extended trip.

You come back at the end of the trip, and you're kind of shocked when you drive up to your place of business, and the lights are out. There are no lights on in the building. You walk in, and it's in complete disarray. You have employees fighting in there. The machines are all offline. There's no production going on. The place is a disaster. It's just total chaos. You call these leaders together and say, "What's going on? How did you let this happen?" They said, "You never called us. We were waiting for you to call and tell us what to do." You say, "I gave you a book.

I gave you a book that addresses everything." "Well, yeah, but the machines went offline, and we didn't know how to fix them. We didn't know which vendors to use. We didn't know what time the employees were supposed to come in or what was expected of them. A few times, we waited around the phone hoping you would make a Zoom call and tell us what to do, but you didn't call." "But I gave you a book. It's all in the book. All of these things are addressed in the book. By the way, I did call a couple of times, and you never picked up."

I think we can be that way, pleading with God. "God, show me what to do!" He said, "I've given you a Book. And by the way, I did call a few times, but you didn't pick up." Because when God calls, He calls your spirit. That's where He speaks to us. Proverbs says, "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord." When God illuminates you, when He guides you, it's through your spirit. The book of Romans says, the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit. Peter referred to the spirit of man as the hidden man of the heart. But most Christians, unfortunately, are strangers to their own hearts.

Most Christians live in the mental realm. All sorts of noise and things going on intellectually and mentally. They live in the physical world, but they have very little touch with the spirit world. Friend, when God speaks to His children, He speaks to our spirit. So, I think it's not that God doesn't ever call. He does, but most people don't pick up because the phone's in here. It's not up here, and it's not out here. It's in our spirit. But that aside, He's given us a Book. The first place we need to listen for God's wisdom is in His Word. Our second letter is I. We need to listen to integrity. Listen to integrity. I want to read to you from Proverbs 11:3 NKJV

<sup>3</sup> The integrity of the upright will guide them, but the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them.

The integrity of the upright will guide them. Guided by integrity. Now, Job said some profound things about integrity. Virtually any translation you pick would be great, but I really like it out of the message. So, I'm going to read it to you from that. This is Job 27:3–5 MSG. Job said this,

<sup>3–5</sup> But for as long as I draw breath, and for as long as God breathes life into me, I refuse to say one word that isn't true. I refuse to confess to any charge that's false. There is no way I'll ever agree to your accusations. I'll not deny my integrity even if it costs me my life. I'm holding fast to my integrity and not loosening my grip—and, believe me, I'll never regret it.

King David said this in Psalm 26:11 NKJV,

<sup>11</sup> But as for me, I will walk in my integrity.

Now, walk speaks of a lifestyle. It speaks of the way that you conduct yourself in relationships, in business, and in everything else. As for me, I will walk in my integrity. Listen, once we make the decision that we're going to walk in integrity and be guided by integrity, three-fourths of the other decisions we will make in life are automatically already made. You don't have to pray about them if you just choose to walk in integrity. In other words, if it causes me to violate my integrity, the answer is no. I don't need to think about it. I don't need to pray about it. The answer is already made. The decision is made. If it gets me in trouble, or if it makes me unpopular, or if it makes me or you uncomfortable, as long as I draw breath, I will hold fast to my integrity.

Let's say you're having a yard sale. You and your wife have just bought a new kitchen table. So, you're going to sell the old one, and it is sort of the crown jewel of all the stuff you're going to sell. It's a pretty nice table. So, you've got it out there, and you've put a little ad in the paper that says, "Yard sale, 8 am." Of course, there are always the people who show up at 6:30am or 7am. They want to be the first ones there. They're actually pretty clever.

So, you're getting everything set out, and sure enough, at 7:05 am, a car drives up. A guy gets out and immediately goes to the table. He said, "Man, that's a pretty nice table. What do you want for it?" You say, "Well, we're thinking \$200." He said, "That's kind of steep. I'll give you \$100 for it." "Nah, I can't sell that for \$100." "I'll give you \$125." "Nah, I'll tell you what. I'll take \$175 for it." The guy said, "Well, yeah, it's a beautiful table. I'll tell you what. I'll give you \$150. Will you do that?" You think about it and say, "Okay, deal." So, you shake hands. He says, "I didn't bring that much cash with me. I wasn't expecting to spend that much. I'm going to go home and get the money. I'll be back within the hour. We got a deal. The table is mine." You shake hands with him and say, "Yes."

So, as he's driving off, another car pulls up. A guy gets out and makes a beeline for the table. He says, "Nice table, how much?" You say, "Oh, sorry, it's already been sold." "Are you kidding? Well, why is it still here?" "Well, the guy just went to get the money. He didn't have the cash on him." He says, "What did he pay for it?" "\$150." "\$150? I'll give you \$175 for it right now." "No, I've already agreed and given my word. I sold it to the guy for \$150." I'll give you \$200 for it." "No, you don't understand. You could offer me \$2,000 for the table. It's not for sale." My integrity is not for sale at any price. You don't need to think about it. You don't need to pray about it.

I was preaching in another state. A guy that I had met was, actually, the president of a large corporation. He knew I was going to be there and asked me if I'd go golf with him. I said, "Sure." So, we went out, and he belonged to this private country club. We go out to golf and listen, if you're going to have a casual game of golf, let's establish that before we start. If you're going to take mulligans, hit second shots, and improve your lie, that's fine, but let's just make that clear before we start. Otherwise, let's play golf. There are rules to the game of golf.

So, we go to play, and he's pretty competitive. Then, on the third hole, he starts cheating. He didn't think I saw him. He hits his ball about three feet into the rough. Terrible lie. You can barely see the top of his ball. He moves it out really quickly onto the fairway. Now he's got a perfect lie. He hits a really good shot. Two holes later, he does it again. The next hole, he does it again. A few holes later, he hits one in a bunker, and he's stuck under the lip. He's dead. He moves the ball five feet and gives himself a perfect lie. He hits it up next to the pin and sinks the putt.

This went on all day. We get done, and he adds up the scores. He says, "Oh, Bayless, it looks like I beat you by a couple of strokes today. The Holy Spirit was really with me." I'm thinking, "Yeah, there was a spirit with you, but it wasn't holy." Now, somebody says, "What's the big deal? It's just a game of golf." I agree. It's not a big deal. But the thing is, you can't compartmentalize your life. We do that all the time. We've got this little compartment here. Friend, God doesn't look at your life as compartmentalized. This is your life. And the truth is what you do in one area will always, always, always bleed over into other areas. As much as you might like to seal that little compartment off, you can't do it. It bleeds into other areas. A few months later, this guy violated his integrity in a much more serious manner. He ruined his reputation and almost lost his marriage. Let integrity guide you. Listen to integrity. All right, our next letter is S. It stands for this: we need to listen to shalom, to peace. Proverbs 3:13 NKJV,

<sup>13</sup> Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding.

We come to verse 17. Talking about wisdom,

<sup>17</sup> Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

It's the Hebrew word shalom. All of wisdom's paths are peace. Not a few, not most, all of wisdom's paths are shalom. In other words, if you're walking on a pathway, and you're thinking about doing something, praying about doing it. It's a pathway of God's wisdom for you. There's going to be peace in your heart. Now, that doesn't mean that fear won't assail your mind. That doesn't mean that doubts will never come against your mind. But when you pray, and you're putting in time, and you lean out on the inside, shalom will be there if it's a pathway of God's wisdom. It says this of wisdom that all of her ways are of pleasantness. The Hebrew word pleasantness literally means "to be polished smooth," as opposed to something having a jagged edge or a rough edge.

I went to put on a sock the other day. I didn't realize my little toenail on one foot was split on the edge. I go to put on a sock, and my toenail is caught. I went to do it again. The sock is going on smoothly, and it gets caught again. That's the idea. As I pray about this, as I'm thinking about going down this pathway, I can't get around it; there's just this little snag inside. I've got a hitch inside. It's not a big thing, but just something is bothering me. You better pray more about it, friend. Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness. They are polished smooth, which is talking about when God speaks to our heart. All of wisdom's paths are peace.

I've shared this story before, but many years ago I had some friends ask me if I would meet with some businessmen. These guys had this thing set up for churches. It was an investment thing to help bless the churches. The minimum buy-in was a quarter of a million dollars, but the returns on it were almost unbelievable. Virtually everyone, without exception, every pastor that I knew who was within my circle of friends, had invested. Some invested quite a bit more. I knew of several other large national and international ministries that had invested as well.

So, these business guys come and explain the whole thing to me. They said, "Do you want to do it?" While they're talking to me, I'm wanting to put that sock on, but something's catching. It's just a small thing, but something's scratching me inside. I said, "Guys, can you come back tomorrow? I just want to pray about it." They said, "Okay, but this is God's thing, and it won't be there forever." I said, "Okay, I'll talk to you tomorrow." So, they left, and I called some of my friends. They said, "Oh man, the check is there every month. This is a sure deal. It's awesome!" I really prayed about it that night. I was thinking about how great it would be. But inside,

something was scratching me. Something wasn't smooth. They came back the next morning. I said, "Guys, I hope I haven't wasted your time, but I'm not going to do it." Then they really drilled down on me.

I remember one of the guys saying that the Bible says that the wealth of the sinners is laid up for the just. He said, "This is God's end-time strategy for financing His kingdom. This is it. This is the strategy for this generation. It is going to fund every vision that every pastor has. We don't understand why you're not doing it. I mean, all these other guys' visions will come to pass, and you're going to be languishing out here on the side somewhere. They made me feel terrible, like I was just missing God. I said, "I'm sorry, guys. I hope it goes well for everybody else, but I just can't do it. I don't have peace." They left kind of angry.

A few months later, it came out that they were crooks. They ended up going to prison. They stole somewhere in the neighborhood of \$100 million from these churches. I don't think any of the pastors or any of those churches got their money back. Some of you, right now, have things you're praying about. You need to listen. All of wisdom's paths are peace. Colossians 3:15 NKJV says,

<sup>15</sup> And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Let the peace of God rule in your heart. The Greek word translated rule there literally means to "act as an umpire." Let the peace of God act as an umpire in your heart. What does an umpire do? An umpire says, "Hey, that's out of bounds. You can't keep going." Or an umpire says, "No, that's fair play. Keep going." As I'm praying, as I'm putting my time in and I'm leaning into it and getting quiet, the umpire may be making a call. "That's fair territory." I'm going to keep going, or I might have that hitch inside. The umpire's also making a call.

I want to quote you that same verse, Colossians 3:15, from the Amplified Bible. Listen to it. It won't be on the screen, so listen carefully. It says, "And let the peace from Christ act as umpire continually, deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your mind." Let the peace of God, the peace from Christ, act as an umpire continually deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your mind. All questions that means your career, your future spouse, all questions. I pretty much make life's biggest decisions based on the umpire's call. If I've honestly put my time in, and if the umpire's made a call and I have peace, I go for it.

On the other hand, if I've got a hitch inside, I'm not doing it. I literally make the biggest decisions in my life based on the umpire's call. We need to listen to Shalom. Shalom. All of wisdom's paths are shalom. All of them. I've got about five illustrations I want to throw at you, but I'm not going to do it. All right, one last letter: E. E stands for experts. Listen to the experts. In other words, those who have traveled down the road ahead of you. Those who have had more experience than you. Those who have gone through some of the same things that you're facing now. Some who have accomplished things that you're endeavoring to accomplish. Proverbs 11:14 NKJV says,

<sup>14</sup> Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

Proverbs 15:22 NKJV.

<sup>22</sup> Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established.

If the counsel that others give you is different from what you believe God has said to your heart, just pray more about it. Spend more time waiting on God because others can help us see things that we haven't thought of. Everything from timing to motives and on and on. But you don't want to make some decisions in a vacuum. You'll get in trouble doing that. Proverbs 18:1 NKJV says this,

<sup>1</sup> A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; he rages against all wise judgment.

Isolation leads to crazy thinking. Listen, if you have four or five girlfriends who are all saying, "What are you doing with that guy? He's bad news for you." Maybe you should listen to them. They might be seeing something that you're not seeing. Or maybe you're just so glad somebody's finally paying attention to you that you're just kind of going around every single roadblock you know God has put there. Thank God for counselors. I was staying down in Mexico City once doing some ministry, staying in the house of Wayne Myers. Wayne is the grandfather of Bethany, Harrison's wife. Harrison's grandfather-in-law. He's been a missionary in Mexico for 77 years, something like that. He's 102 now. I was down there a long time ago, decades ago. I had an issue. There was something that I was thinking about doing, and I couldn't see my way clear. I prayed about it, but it was still muddy. I'd waited on God, but it just was still unclear.

Every morning, Wayne and I would get up. He'd throw some logs in the fire long before daylight. We would worship God and pray together in his living room. We got done praying one day. I said, "Wayne, I need some counsel." I said, "Here's the deal. This is what I'm thinking about doing, and I'm not sure." For the next half hour, he just shared with me from his experiences and how he would recognize what God was saying to him. I can't tell you how it happened, but somehow, as he was sharing with me, all of the pieces just kind of fit together.

I got on the phone. There weren't any mobile phones or personal computers. I had to get on a landline because there was pressure to do this thing, and I would have made a different decision had I not talked with him. I called the guys and said, "I'm not going do this. I'm out." It made some people upset, but looking back now, I realize that it would have cost me so much time and so much grief if I had gone ahead and made the decision that I was thinking about making. God helped me through the counsel of somebody who had been down the road before I had been there.

If we're going to be wise, we need to listen to W, God's Word. We need to listen to I, integrity. S, we need to listen to Shalom. E, we need to listen to the experts. The wisest thing that any human being can ever do is just make sure you get sorted out with God. There's nothing more important in this life than your spiritual life. This is just a dressing room for eternity. It's interesting. When you read in the book of Genesis about the creation account, God literally brought the trees out of the soil. Then, He created the seas, and God brought the fish out of the seas.

The soil was the natural environment of the trees, and the oceans were the natural environment of the fish. Then God brought man out of Himself, formed his body out of the dust of the earth.

Then God breathed into that body and man became a living soul. Well, if you take a tree and separate it from the soil, it dies. If you take a fish and separate it from the sea, it dies. You take a man, and separate him from God, he dies. God said to Adam, "It's all yours. Just one thing that I claim exclusive right to is I decide what's sin and what's not. There are boundaries, and I determine them. If you ever violate that, the day you do it, you will die." In the Hebrew, the word die is there is said twice. God said, "You'll die, die. You'll die a double death." We know the story. Adam decided he was going to be like God. "Who says that I have to follow Your rules?" He stepped out from under God's authority, and he did die that day. He died spiritually. It means to be cut off and severed from God. The book of Romans says the state of spiritual death has been passed on to all humanity.

The fact is we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. I think intuitively every person senses something is missing, that crazy missing piece to the puzzle. It's like, "How can I fill this vacuum I have inside?" So, we run from woman to woman. We run from man to man. We do drugs. We get involved in excessive alcohol use. We are all trying to fill that empty place. Some people try through religious ritual and ceremony to fill the empty place. Some people try by getting more money, getting more stuff, but it never fills the empty place. Some people try through extreme sports, and they get an adrenaline rush, but it never fills the empty place.

It's a God-shaped hole. Here's what the Bible says in the book of Colossians: that Jesus has made peace for us through the blood of His cross. The most common word for peace in the New Testament literally means to "join together that which was previously severed." It literally means to "join together something that's been broken apart." Through the blood of His cross, Jesus made a way for us to be joined back to God. As human beings separated from God, we're in a state of spiritual death.

That doesn't mean to cease to exist; it means to be spiritually dead, to be cut off from God. There's one way back into a relationship with God. It's by believing in Jesus Christ. He who knew no sin was made to be sin for us. When Jesus hung upon that cross, He took my place. In the Father's eyes, it was me upon that cross. Jesus bore my sin and the weight of all my wrongdoing and wrong thinking. He took the punishment of it all as my substitute, and because of that—The scripture says this, "He who knew no sin was made to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Christ." God took my sin and put it upon Jesus. He took the rightness of Jesus, and He put it upon me. Substitution.

Here's what the Bible says, "If you believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, and if you confess Him with your mouth as Lord, God brings you into a relationship, that's called salvation." It's not about ceremony. It's not about an endless list of stuff that you're no longer allowed to do. It's about a relationship. It's about a walking and talking relationship. Being reunited with the God who created you. Jesus said, "I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Listen, just by virtue of how many people are here, outside and in this auditorium. I know there's some people here, and you've done some brutal, extremely wrong things. Jesus died for those sins. For others who are in here, maybe you were raised in sort of a godly home, but you've never made a personal decision to follow Christ. Maybe your Daddy was a Methodist pastor, a Baptist minister, or a Pentecostal pastor. You still need to have a personal encounter with Jesus because God has no grandchildren. He only has children. He sees you today. I'm going to lead you in a simple prayer. If you'll tie your heart around the words and be sincere in speaking them to God, He'll meet you. As well, I just want to encourage you because I know, that I know, that I know, that I know, The truth is, I spent two weeks preparing a message about Palm Sunday

and the triumphal entry. I just hit a dead end inside. I knew I was supposed to speak from Proverbs with this word that I brought today. Some of you are in the valley of decision. God has wisdom laid up for you. I want you to be confident. He wants to help you, and He will guide you. He will do it. Can we close our eyes just for a minute?

Lord, we thank You for the wisdom You've laid up for us. Thank You for the Book. Thank You that we can listen to integrity. Thank You for Your peace, Your shalom. Thank You for the experience of those who have been down the road ahead of us. Lord, right now, we just settle our hearts before You, and we yield to You. Jesus, we believe that You bore our sins in Your body on the tree. It's because of Your sacrifice that we can be made right with God, but it's only when we believe. Lord, we do.

I want to lead you in a prayer. All I can do is give you the words, but if you'll tie your heart around the words and sincerely speak them to God, He'll meet with you. Why don't you pray after me? Say,

Oh God, I come before You right now. I believe Jesus Christ is Your Son. I believe He died on the cross for me. I believe He bore the penalty for my sins and that He was raised from the dead. Jesus, I put my trust in You and I confess You as my Lord. All I am and all I have, I give it to You, Jesus. Amen.

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