

# Acquiring a Heart of Wisdom

by Zac Poonen

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*Acquiring a heart of wisdom is crucial for being ready for the coming of the Lord and for living a life that is completely independent of external circumstances.*

**Duration:** 56:16

**Scripture:** Psalm 90:12, Isaiah 11:2, Matthew 25:4, Luke 2:52, James 3:17

**Topics:** "Christian Wisdom", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of acquiring wisdom in our lives, drawing insights from Psalms 90 and the life of Jesus. It highlights the need to submit to imperfect authority, resist sin, meditate on God's word, and seek wisdom from above, which is pure, peaceable, and full of mercy.

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## Transcript

I want to turn to what I think is one of the most wonderful prayers in the Old Testament in Psalm 90. Psalm 90 and verse 12. This is the only Psalm written by Paul Moses.

Most of the Psalms were written by David, one or two by Solomon, but this one was written by Moses. And out there in the wilderness he saw people dying one after the other. He saw 600,000 people who were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, not going in to possess the land God had promised them, and he saw that there were only two out of them who had the wisdom to go in.

So he prays a prayer for the people and says here, Lord teach us to number our days, that we may present to you a heart of wisdom. In your case, in my case, we don't know how long we're going to live, but those people in the wilderness, all those who are above 20, knew that the maximum they would live would be another 40 years. So 38 years from the time they turned away from the land.

Everybody would have to die, they wouldn't know how long, but within 38 years they would all die. So I mean, like somebody would die when they're 58 or 60. So we also are in that sort of situation, we don't really know when we're going to die, but in God's perfect plan, he has allotted a number of days for us.

And the purpose is that in those days, we acquire wisdom before we leave this earth. I don't know whether that is the passion of your heart, that before I finish my days, I must acquire all the wisdom of God, that he wants me to acquire on this earth before I leave. There are a lot of things we cannot learn in heaven.

I hope you know that. There are many things we learn in heaven, which we can't learn here. More about God, about many, many things in the universe and God's ways, we'll understand.

But there are certain things we will not be able to do when we go to heaven. For example, you can't love your enemies when you go to heaven, because there are no enemies there. You won't be able to resist Satan.

You will not be able to overcome anxiety, because there's no reason for anxiety there. You will not be able to overcome fear. You will not be able to overcome lust.

For example, if you haven't overcome lust and anger and anxiety on this earth, you're going to go to heaven without having overcome something which you should have overcome. So it's a tremendous prayer. Lord, teach us to number our days.

How many more days do I have? Even you young people, we never know how soon death can come, the Lord may come. Whatever the number of days are, Lord, help me to acquire wisdom so that finally, as it says here, I may present to you a heart of wisdom. That's a very good goal for all of us to have.

That at the end of our life, whenever we leave the earth, whether it's through the coming of the Lord or through death, we can present to the Lord a heart of wisdom, which we acquired on earth. I believe that is the oil that the wise virgins had, the spirit of wisdom. And the foolish virgins didn't have it.

They only had a light, which means their external life. But the wise virgins, in addition to the external light, had a hidden flask of oil, which nobody could see. That was a flask of wisdom.

In the beginning, you couldn't see the difference between the two virgins, because you only see the light burning. If the bridegroom had come quickly, all ten would have appeared wise. You turn to Matthew chapter 25.

Matthew 25, it says, The foolish took their lamps, but they took no oil with them. But the wise took oil in their flasks along with them. What do wise people have? Wisdom.

What do foolish people have? Foolishness. So what was the oil which the wise people had? Wisdom. You don't need any interpretation for that.

Jesus himself said it, that they were wise people. What do they have? What do wise people carry, which foolish people don't carry? Wisdom. And the thing you see here is, in the beginning, the foolish person and the wise person look alike, because both of them, their lamps are burning.

The important thing is that your lamp should be burning when the bridegroom comes, and their lamps were burning. And if the bridegroom had come a little earlier, all ten would have looked wise. But the Lord knew that some of these folks are not wise.

They're just concerned about their testimony before men. They want to impress people that they're good people. And that is an external reformation.

You know, a lot of things that we hear in the church can bring in us an external reformation, which gives us a good testimony before men. And those are the foolish people. The foolish people are not those out in the world who never come to the meetings, no.

The foolish people are the ones who come to the meetings, listen to everything that is said, but are only concerned about the external. In the story of the wise and foolish builders, it's the same thing. The foolish man didn't go deep enough to lay a foundation.

They were both building next door to each other, I mean, next to each other. Same type of ground, but this man said, oh, who's going to dig all the way to the rock? The main thing is the house. It must be impressive.

Everybody must see it. He built. The wise man, he said, no, no, no.

Even if it takes longer, even if it gets more money, I'm going to dig till I hit rock. They didn't have concrete in all those days, steel rods and all. They had to go hit rock and lay the foundation on the rock.

That took a long time, to blast it and break it and put the foundation in there. And by the time the foolish man has finished his house, the wise man is still building the foundation. And for some time, both looked the same, both houses.

In fact, the wise man looked foolish in the eyes of the world, because he wasted more money. He took more time. Whereas, people in the world might say, look at this fellow.

He spent 25% of what that man spent and he's built a much better house, much quicker too. And like the case of the virgins, for some time, it looked like that. But one day the flood came.

Then it became evident who was wise and who was foolish. So wisdom in that story is the foundation. Again, the hidden part.

What is common about both these parables? The foundation is hidden. The flask of oil is hidden. You don't see it.

Wisdom is a hidden thing and that is the one thing that will make you ready for the coming of the Lord. It's not your good testimony before men. You can do all the external things we say in the church and you can still be a foolish virgin because a foolish virgin is one whose lamp is burning.

Notice when it says here, why in verse 3, the bridegroom delayed his coming. That's how he exposes the wise and the foolish. Time is the great factor by which the wise and the foolish are distinguished.

I mean, if the Lord allows people just to live for one day after they are born again, I think everybody will look wise because I think the first day everybody is born again, they are pretty wholehearted. But God does not take away their lives one day after they are born again to heaven. He allows them to live so many years on earth.

Is it only that we might witness to other people? No. Jesus didn't witness to other people by preaching for 30 years. No, it was something else.

It says about Jesus that he grew in wisdom in those 30 years. And that was why he had such an effective ministry in three and a half years. I mean, you can have an effective ministry.

You may not preach in the pulpit, but even speaking words of wisdom to people who come and visit you, sisters, brothers. The spirit of wisdom, if it's upon you, you can be a tremendous blessing to everyone who comes in touch with you. That's been my desire from the time I was a young man.

And I am sorry to say that many, many people don't seem to have that passion to grow in wisdom like Jesus. That is the thing that makes you rich spiritually. This inward wisdom which is hidden, the foundation in the house or the hidden flask of oil and time.

That means everybody looks wholehearted in the beginning. I mean, we've seen that in the church. We've been growing as a church.

We are now 31 years. And I've seen a lot of things in these 31 years in different people, not only here, but in other parts of India. I've seen some excellent brothers, very good brothers, came to the church when they were young.

And I've seen what's happened to them after a while. God blesses them in some way. Maybe they have a gift to speak.

Or in some cases, God gives them the opportunity to lead a small church in some part of India. And it goes to their head. You see, one of the primary marks of foolishness is spiritual pride.

Spiritual pride is one of the biggest marks of a foolish person. And these people I've seen, they become foolish. And then some of them fall away.

Some of them just backslide and sit there. You know that King Saul remained as king even after the anointing had gone for a number of years, at least 10 or 12 years, because David was a young man when the spirit left Saul and came upon David. David was around 20 and David didn't become king until he was 30.

So at least about 10 years, Saul was sitting on the throne without the anointing. There are elders who sit today in different churches. No wisdom.

They are elders. God allows them to stay there till one day he himself removes them. Or it may be we have seen also that God blesses somebody financially.

Good job, good salary. That goes to their head and they become foolish. There are all types of things that can make people foolish.

Now if I need poverty in order to be wise, then I have to say my wisdom is dependent on something outside of me. You know in the Old Testament, there was this prayer that this man Agur prayed in Proverbs 30. Proverbs 30 was written by a man called Agur, not Solomon.

You see that in the first verse. One of the prayers he prayed, inspired by the Holy Spirit, was, verse 7, two things I've asked of you. One is keep deception and lies from me.

The second is, verse 8, give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with the food that's my portion. Otherwise I'll be full and I may deny you and say who's the Lord? Or if I'm in want, I may steal.

Now I have heard of numerous Christians who pray that prayer. Lord, don't make me too poor, don't make me too rich. Now some people of course only pray, Lord, don't ever make me poor at all, just make me rich.

I think both of them are foolish. You know what the New Testament prayer is? See Philippians 4. What is the reason why this man in this Agur said, Lord, don't make me poor or rich. He said, if I'm poor, I'll steal.

If I'm rich, I may forget about you. I don't believe that about myself. I don't believe if I'm poor, I'll steal.

I have been poor and I never stole, never got into debt even. And God's blessed me materially and I haven't forgotten about God at all. No.

See what Paul says in Philippians 4. I have learned, verse 11, to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with very little and I know how to live in prosperity. See this is different from the prayer in Proverbs 30.

He says, I know how to live with very little. In fact, in 2 Corinthians 11, he says there were times when he didn't have enough food to eat and he didn't have enough warm clothes to cover himself. He was happy.

There were other times when he had plenty. Didn't make any difference to him because his relationship with the Lord was completely independent of external circumstances. That is the mark of a wise man.

His relationship with the Lord is independent of external circumstances. It's like, you know, if we have a generator in our meeting hall, the lights may go out everywhere else or they may come on. They may come on, they may go off.

Makes no difference to us. We have lights all the time. That's how our life is to be, that we have a connection with the light of the world, with Jesus Christ, that it doesn't matter.

Circumstances, it may be anything. People around us may behave themselves or not behave themselves. It makes no difference.

This light will always burn. The test of a wise man is that his life is completely independent of other people and other circumstances. That's why Jesus said in John 16, your joy, nobody can take away from you because I am supplying it from within.

It's like if the corporation is supplying your water, they can turn it off. You become dry. But if you've got a spring in your own house or a well, they can turn off the water supply.

Makes no difference. That is true Christianity, where your joy is not dependent on another person praising you or another person giving you a gift or something going well. It doesn't even depend on health or wealth or nothing.

If your joy is still dependent on outer circumstances, then you're like one of the foolish virgins. It's the outer life that matters. The way people treat you makes a difference.

One of the things that I have worked at, the Bible says, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. It's a command which most believers don't fulfill. But the Bible says that, Philippians 2, 12 and 13, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

A lot of believers are trying to work out other people's salvation. But the Bible says, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling because God is at work in you to will and to do His good pleasure. That means when the Holy Spirit is working in me to do God's will, to give me a desire to do God's will, I must cooperate with Him in working it out.

And so, one of the areas where I've tried to work out my salvation is to see that my heart, in my heart, there's not even a flutter if somebody praises me or somebody criticizes me. If somebody speaks good of

me or somebody speaks evil of me, I mean, that needle should not move. If it moves a little, I've still got to work out my salvation.

And in the beginning, it does move in all of us. Somebody praises us and, oh, the needle begins to fluctuate quite a lot. Boy, in fact, it keeps fluctuating for a few days sometimes.

Or somebody criticizes us. Boy, it goes on and on and on and on and on. Don't get discouraged.

We are all like that in the beginning. We have to acquire wisdom. We have to slowly get more and more and the needle moves a little less now.

Imagine that we can come to a day when it doesn't move at all. Whether people praise or criticize, why? Because their opinion is fit for the garbage bin. Only God's opinion matters because they see one percent of your life.

They are praising one percent of your life. I mean, it's like there was a math examination with a hundred questions and you got the first question right. And the teacher who only corrected the first question gave you a hundred percent.

But when it went to the exam board, they corrected all hundred and you got one out of a hundred. Because that's the only question you got right. But that foolish teacher who corrected only the first question gave you a hundred percent.

That is exactly what it means to care for the opinions of men. Jesus was so free from the opinions of men. If you want to be wise, learn that.

Don't be concerned like the foolish virgins just to show your light to others. Be more concerned to see whether you have a flask of oil within because circumstances will come in your life which are difficult. Floods, storm, and it looks as if the Lord is not there.

The bridegroom hasn't come. What shall we do? Yup, he's given us his spirit. The spirit of wisdom.

And if we acquire that wisdom in such circumstances, work out our own salvation, we'll be prepared for the coming days. And we'll be prepared for the coming of the Lord. So here we read here, Paul says, I know in every, any, verse 12 middle, in any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret.

Now twice he says these words, I have learned. Verse 11. I have learned.

Verse 12. It's something Paul had to learn. I'm sure even in Paul's life the needle fluttered when people praised him or criticized him in the beginning.

He was not different from us, but he worked out his own salvation. Till it came to a standstill and he said, I seek to please men. I cannot be a servant of Christ.

And he learned to be content sometimes when God didn't give him enough. Praise the Lord. The summary is something I have to learn here.

Sometimes when God gave him plenty. Aha. Maybe God's testing me.

I want to pass the test now. God's given me plenty. He learned the secret.

It is a secret. He says here, I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry and having abundance and suffering need in earthly matters and material things. And I have learned the secret of being completely independent of these circumstances.

That's the meaning of verse 12 in any and every circumstance. That means what happens outside of me doesn't affect my in. I want to say dear brothers and sisters, that is the life you must aim for.

That is the Sabbath rest that Jesus came to give. And he said, come to me, all you labor and are heavy laden. All of you who are struggling to impress people, to impress your elders and struggling and laboring to keep a good testimony before the church and struggling and failing and maybe struggling and succeeding to give a good testimony before the church laboring.

Come to me. Forget about these people. Come to me.

I will give you a rest. I will give you a freedom from the opinions of men. I will give you a freedom from being swayed by circumstances.

You know how the Bible speaks in Ephesians 4 about being like little children tossed to and fro. See here, Ephesians 4 and verse 14. As a result, we are no longer to be children.

Children don't have wisdom. Tossed here and there by waves, circumstances tossed by waves and also carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness and deceitful scheming. See, there are so many doctrines that have come up in Christendom today, which was almost unheard of 50 years ago.

And it's unheard of in the New Testament. But rich preachers, covetous preachers have produced these doctrines and people are swayed. It's amazing.

Thousands of people are being swayed. So we're not children to be tossed about by all these. Because we have wisdom.

We understand. In the Old Testament, they couldn't have this. See David's prayer in Psalm 51.

You know, when David sinned so badly, he knew that God wanted something from him, which he did not have. Even after he repented, sometimes we think, oh, I did a terrible sin, but I repented. I'm OK.

No, you're not OK. David repented when he wrote Psalm 51. In fact, he repented much more than anybody who has repented.

But he knew he was not OK. Haven't you sometimes felt that you did something wrong and you confessed it to God? I said, I don't want to do it again. And you're OK.

It's exactly what the devil wants you to think, that you're OK. Sometimes we have to go and we have to tell a brother, go and apologize to that person whom you hurt. And he reluctantly goes and apologizes to that person and he says he's OK.

What OK? He's a million miles from being OK. David says, Lord, what does God desire? Psalm 51, verse 6. Lord, your desire, truth in the innermost be. Right? And in the hidden part, you will make me to know wisdom.

Truth inside, wisdom inside. That's what God wanted. Not just repentance, not just confessing your sin, not just apologizing to your husband and wife and you think you're a great person.

Oh, I apologize to my wife. What is so great about that? That is a bare minimum. That's like saying, I stole some money from somebody, but brothers and sisters, I went and returned it.

Am I not a good man? Stupidity. You hurt somebody and then you went and asked forgiveness is such a great thing. It's exactly like saying you stole a thousand rupees from his wallet when he was not looking and afterwards you repented and went and returned it.

You should be ashamed of yourself. What you need to now pray is, Lord, please give me wisdom. Repentance is not enough.

David repented. He said, I am the one to blame. I don't blame anybody else.

A lot of people when they sin, they may take half the blame if they're really good people. But all the blame? See what he says here. Verse 4, Against you, you only, I have sinned.

I don't blame Bathsheba. I don't blame anybody else. I blame myself.

Those are the people. He was a man after God's own heart. Not because he never failed, but because he took the blame a hundred percent.

Like the thief on the cross. I believe he was a man after God's own heart because even though he was such a criminal, worse than perhaps any other believer who ever went to heaven, but he took the blame completely on the cross and said, I deserve this. Paradise is made for such people.

Do you know that? You know you can miss paradise like Adam by justifying yourself and not taking the responsibility for your sin. David was not like that. He said, I've sinned.

And, but he says, what you desire, I just don't have. I don't have truth in the innermost being. He recognized it.

I've repented. I sort of be careful in future. But you desire something more, Lord, in my heart.

See, David was around 50 years old when he sinned with Bathsheba. He was a 50 year old man, not a young man. And he's saying, God, I can't see anything.

I don't have. There's lust in my heart. You want wisdom.

I don't have it. I don't have wisdom in my relationship with women, with the opposite sex. God wants to give us wisdom in all areas.

I don't have wisdom in handling money, Lord. You know, these are two of the greatest areas where you need wisdom. In dealing with the opposite sex in your place of work, everywhere, and in handling money.

These are not the only areas. We need wisdom as parents to bring up our children. We need wisdom as, when our children get married, to leave them alone.

So wisdom is something we need all the time, different stages. In the Old Testament, they couldn't have it, because the Holy Spirit was not given. How could they get wisdom inside? The spirit of wisdom had not

been poured out.

And so they would go by what their eyes saw, what their ears heard, and try to keep a good external life. But then, Jesus came with a new message. See Isaiah chapter 11.

In Isaiah chapter 11, there's a prophecy about Jesus Christ. And it speaks about the spirit of God, verse 2, will rest on him. We know, not just rest upon him like the Old Testament people, but was within him.

The first human being that walked on the earth with the spirit within was Jesus. He was fully God on earth and fully man. But he lived on earth as a man, using the power of the Holy Spirit.

So he was dependent on the Holy Spirit as a man, just like you and I. Otherwise, he couldn't be our example. He was the first person who walked on this earth. The man Christ Jesus, as the Bible says, filled with the spirit.

The Bible says he was filled with the spirit. And this spirit is called here the spirit of wisdom. In the same verse, the spirit of wisdom.

Is this the baptism in the Holy Spirit that you got? Or was it only speaking in tongues? Do you know that Jesus never spoke in tongues? So don't glory in that as a great thing. That's good. I mean, I thank God for the gift, but Jesus never spoke in tongues.

And he was the most spiritual man that walked on this earth. The spirit of wisdom. That is the first thing.

That's what we need. That's what the Holy Spirit comes to give us. And because of this spirit of wisdom, it made him, verse 3, fear the Lord.

Because the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. So the Holy Spirit came as a spirit of wisdom in him. It taught him to fear, to reverence God.

Not to be afraid of God, but to reverence his Father as a man. And because of reverence for his Father, it says here, he would not take a judge by what his eyes saw or make a decision by what his ears heard. How did Eve sin? Eve sinned because she judged by what her eyes saw, what her ears heard from the devil.

The eyes saw the fruit and her bodily passions were aroused because she saw the tree, the fruit looked so appetizing. She heard what the devil whispered and said, this is really good for you. Isn't that true that most of our sins come through what we see and what we hear? Not just what we see.

You think I'm sinning a lot by what I see. No, what you hear. If you hear a lot of gossip and backbiting and you let it stay inside you, it'll destroy you.

We can't avoid listening, supposing you're in a place of work and people are just backbiting and speaking against the boss and you can't tell them all to shut up because they're all united in speaking against the boss. But you can make sure that you can be deaf to that. You can't prevent some people bringing pornographic books to college or hanging up dirty calendars in a place of work.

But you can be blind to that. He would not judge by his eyes or what his ears saw. All children of Adam, their wisdom comes from what they hear and what they see.

Human wisdom. That's why they study. They go to school and what do they learn in school? Through their eyes and through their ears.

They read, they listen, and they get a human wisdom. It's true. People read a lot and study a lot.

They get human wisdom. But divine wisdom comes when I say, I'm not going to judge by what my eyes see. My eyes could deceive me.

I'm going to decide by what God's word says. God's word with righteousness. He would judge.

He would allow God's words. That means if Eve was, when she found the eyes telling her something, the ears telling her something, if she had then listened to God's word and said, what's God saying in my heart? Forget about my eyes and my ears. She wouldn't have seen.

It's the same with us today. We see certain things, we hear certain things, and then we must say, hey, now let me listen to what God is saying in my heart. That's how Jesus lived.

See later on in Isaiah, it says in chapter 42, this is again referring to Jesus. Verse one, take a good look at my servant. Take a good look at my servant.

I hope you're doing that. That is that Jesus. I have a verse in the line of fire.

He's the one I chose. I couldn't be more pleased with him. I bathed him with my spirit, my life.

He will not call attention to what he does and he will not disregard small and insignificant people. Verse three, he will not get tired out or quit until he's finished his work. Verse four, and one characteristic of him is, verse 19, he is blind and he's deaf.

Did you know that Jesus was blind and deaf? I don't mean that he couldn't see, but there were certain things he chose not to see. He was blind to them. He was like a blind man when that happened.

Certain things he chose to be deaf. Take a good look at my servant. He lived on this earth just like you and me, and he chose to be blind and deaf to certain things.

And I'll tell you this, if you want to follow Jesus and grow in wisdom, you have to choose, make a choice to be blind and deaf to a number of things. What does God say in my heart in relation to this? That's the important thing. Turn now to Luke's gospel chapter 2. Luke's gospel chapter 2, you know, speaking about when Jesus was a little child, taken to the temple to be dedicated to the Lord.

It says here in verse 22, he was taken to Jerusalem to be presented to the Lord, to God. And then when he came back, what was he? A baby. Verse 39, when they performed everything, that is their dedication, they came back to Galilee, to the city of Nazareth.

From that time onwards, the child, this is not a young man, this is a child, continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom. And the grace of God was upon him. That's why he increased in wisdom.

The first person on whom it's the Bible says grace was upon him. And when grace, when we are under grace, what is the result? Sin shall not have dominion over us. Sin couldn't have dominion over Jesus.

He grew in wisdom, the grace of God was always upon him. He chose to be there. You know, it's like a waterfall, the Holy Spirit falling from heaven, and I stand under there, and all types of people are inviting

me, hey, come, there's something interesting here, something interesting there.

I said, fine, I want to be here. I know there are a whole lot of interesting things there, but I don't want to be there. I want to be under this waterfall all the time.

It's we who choose to move out from there because of entertaining things that different people invite us to. And we lose this fullness of the Holy Spirit. And what a loss it is.

You cannot be wise if you're not filled with the Holy Spirit. If you don't live continuously under the fullness and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He grew in wisdom.

Further down in Luke chapter 2 verse 52, last verse, and then Jesus kept, this is after the age of 12, he kept on increasing in wisdom. So, from babyhood to 12, verse 40, and from 12 all the way to adulthood, verse 52. All the way, he kept on increasing in wisdom and stature.

It doesn't mean he sinned. No. There was no foolishness in him.

There was no sin in him. But as a man, he had to learn so many things. Just like a child has to learn ABC.

If a child doesn't know ABC, that's not a sin. If a child goes to school and doesn't know geography, that's not a sin. It learns.

So, just like in school, we get an education. So, Jesus didn't sin, but he acquired wisdom because he grew up as a baby. Just like in earthly things, he grew in wisdom.

How did he grow in wisdom? We saw that in Isaiah 11. He would not go by what his eyes told him or his ears told him. He was blind and deaf to the influences of the world that tried to make him take certain decisions or do this or do that.

He would see it, he would hear it, but he'd say, what does my father say? You know, that's the way to live. I'll give you an example. You can do good things and not be wise.

Jesus once went to the house of Mary and Martha with his twelve disciples, thirteen people suddenly coming for lunch. What should you do? Quickly go and prepare lunch. That's exactly what Martha did.

But Mary, she had a little more wisdom. Because Jesus was preaching there in the front room and the disciples were all listening and Mary said, boy, I don't care if I don't have lunch. I'm sure Jesus is more spiritual than me.

I'm sure he's not bothered whether he has lunch or not. The most important thing right now is to hear his word. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth.

He heard the words coming out of God's mouth and said, I'm going to listen to that. Martha was so agitated and came to Jesus and said, don't you see this sister of mine, lazy sister, is not coming and helping me? And Jesus said, no, Martha, you're worried about many things, but Mary has chosen that good thing which will never be taken away from her. What was it? The habit of listening.

I said this before to you, that for forty-five years God has said to me, listen to me, listen to me. You will not waste your life if you listen to me. I want to encourage you to develop the habit of listening.

We see so many things. We hear so many things. Don't believe everything you see and you hear.

Don't be drawn by what you see and you hear, but always listen to what God is saying in your heart and follow that. That's how Jesus grew in wisdom. That's how he never sinned.

That's how the grace of God was upon him. It's a wonderful thing that he's our forerunner. He ran the same race, otherwise he couldn't have the title forerunner.

I mean, if he ran somewhere else, I mean, if somebody lives on Mars and says he's my forerunner, my example, I say, hey, you don't know, man. You live on Mars. I don't know anything about the conditions there, but some people believe that Jesus lived that type of life.

Some Martian comes to earth and says, follow me. I can't follow you. You're not like me.

So Jesus was not a Martian. He didn't come like that. He came exactly like us.

That's why he could say, follow me. He's a forerunner means the same race I run, he ran in front of me. I praise God for that.

The way he grew in wisdom is the way I can grow. Another thing we see here, verse 51, Luke 2, 51. He went down with his earthly parents to Nazareth and he, listen to this.

This is another secret of growing in wisdom. He continued in subjection to them, not just once or twice, not most of the time, but it was a continual attitude of submitting to imperfect parents. Do you know that it's very easy to submit to perfect people? Even that can be difficult.

God is perfect. A lot of people don't submit to him. But when God asks you in some situation to submit to somebody who's not perfect.

Now I'll tell you a little secret. Do you know why God allows you to see some weaknesses in your elders to see whether you will judge them or whether you'll still submit to them? Do you think Jesus was under the assumption that Mary was perfect or Joseph was perfect? Not at all. He could see with his own eyes.

They're losing their temper. They're getting worried. They were just like any earthly couple.

All types of things happened. Imagine Mary had six or seven children, seven at least. Can you imagine a mother with seven children? She didn't have the Holy Spirit, no grace, old covenant.

What a lot of sin there must have been in that house that Jesus saw in 30 years in his mother. But he never judged her. What an example.

Glory. I say, Lord, give me a heart of wisdom. Let me recognize authority and submit to it.

I'm not preaching, but I have not practiced. I have done this in my younger years when I was just a young person and elder brothers were jealous of me. They wouldn't let me speak.

They would humiliate me. In one assembly, they just made me sit at the back for three years without opening my mouth. And that was an assembly where at one time I had special meetings.

But they were upset with something in me. And the Lord said, shut your mouth and sit there and submit to these elders. You know what I did? I shut my mouth and sat there and submitted to the elders for three years.

I'll tell you the result. It's gone very well with me. God's given me a lot of wisdom.

It came through submission. I refused to justify myself. I refused to explain anything to anybody else who came and asked me.

I said, no. Most of our leakage is through our mouth. Most of the leakage is through the mouth.

I'll tell you this. There'll be very little leakage in your mouth, in your life, if you control your mouth. It's a leaky vessel, but it's very easy to plug it.

I said, Lord, I'm not going to say anything. What does it say in Proverbs? Where there are many words, Proverbs 10, sin will not be lacking. John Wesley had a rule, if I remember right.

He said, especially to women, but sometimes to men also, because some men are like women, you shouldn't visit a house for more than 45 minutes. After that, you'll sin in your conversation. I mean, if you're speaking all the time.

After 45 minutes, you'll switch over to people and this and that and the other. I mean, there's no verse like that in the Bible, so I don't make it a law. And he didn't make it a law either.

He was just giving some helpful advice. You know, like the doctor says, walk half an hour a day. That's not in the Bible, but it's good advice.

So it's like that. John Wesley gave some good advice, because he knew that so much of leakage of power is through the mouth. And then this 220 volt bright light begins to dim and you wonder what happened.

Power is gone. Jesus never lost power. He submitted to whatever authority the Father put over him.

It didn't matter. The question is not Joseph and Mary. The question is, who has the Father put over me? Full stop.

That's it. The Father. Now he has put Joseph and Mary.

If Jesus was working in an office instead of his own carpenter shop, he would have submitted to the boss there. The boss would have been imperfect, probably an unbeliever. It makes no difference.

Supposing you're working in an office where the boss gives a bribe and does all types of wrong things. That's none of your business. If you feel that's the place where you should work, you just submit to him.

You don't do anything wrong yourself, of course. Jesus would never do anything wrong himself. But he would submit to imperfect people.

And I'll tell you something. I have seen that God never gives authority, spiritual authority, to a man who has not first learned submission. He submitted and he increased in wisdom.

You see the connection? He resisted sin all those 30 years. Whenever he was tempted, he resisted. He said, I will not go by my passions, by my eyes or ears.

I'll please my Father. And he would pray, loud crying, strong crying, and tears so that he would not sin. And he increased in wisdom.

And he meditated on the scriptures. And he increased in wisdom. These were the secrets of his life.

He didn't have a Bible like you and I have. But he listened when he went to the synagogue so that by the time he was 12 years old, he had meditated so much on what he had heard that he knew more than the others. Can you imagine if you didn't have a Bible yourself and you only heard, let's say, maybe they taught the Bible even in the schools, in the Jewish community.

Okay, let's say that you are listening to the Bible seven days a week. I mean, in the school, they don't only teach the Bible. Other things too.

They hear a message. But that's maybe one hour every day. How good will your knowledge of the Bible be if you don't have a written Bible with you? Jesus knew it by the age of 12.

Have you seen 12, some of you got 12 year old boys? How much do they know? Jesus was diligent to pay attention because he believed it was the word of God. Do you know that lots of believers say this is the word of God, but they don't treat it like that. If they did, they would be very, very eager to know what God says.

That's how he became wise. So let's pray that prayer of Moses. Lord, please feed a number of my days.

I have only a few days left on earth. That at the end of my life, I can present to you a heart of wisdom. In conclusion, James chapter three, James chapter three, there is a wisdom that comes from beneath.

Verse 13, who is wise and understanding, let him show by his good behavior, his deeds, the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have jealousy and ambition, that wisdom, verse 15, is demonic. There is a wisdom which is earthly, verse 15, which is demonic, which comes from the pit, comes from the pit.

It produces jealousy. Are you jealous of somebody? Be honest now, right now. Is there somebody you are jealous of who is better than you, maybe richer than you? Whatever it is, are you jealous of somebody's family or children or house or anything? You have got a wisdom which is demonic.

It says here. And if you are selfishly ambitious, that means you want to promote yourself to be somebody. Do you have a desire to promote yourself over others? To be known by others as senior brother, senior sister in the church? You have a wisdom which is demonic.

You want to promote yourself over others? Why not just be wholehearted before God? You can say, I want to be wholehearted before you. I don't want to promote myself over anybody. Let them be wholehearted also.

I just want to be wholehearted before you. That is wisdom. But if you are in a competition to show that I am better, my children are better, you have got a demonic wisdom despite all your knowledge of what you are hearing in the church.

Wisdom from above is first, verse 17, pure, peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy, good fruits, unwavering, without partiality, without hypocrisy. Well, we could talk a lot about that, particularly partiality and hypocrisy. Let's pray that God will give us wisdom.

Heavenly Father, help us in the short time we are here to acquire what is most important, the wisdom of God through the Holy Spirit. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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