

## The Wisdom-Giver

**The LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding** (Proverbs 2:6).

**Scripture:** Proverbs 2:1-11

**Song:** “Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus”

As a teacher, I’m expected to impart knowledge to my students. But not all students want the information teachers have to offer. After all, whether it’s public or private school, students are required to be there, and some don’t want to be. On the other hand, there are students who enjoy learning, soaking up what they’re taught like sponges, as they prepare for life beyond graduation.

Solomon knew a thing or two about the profound knowledge that came from God’s wisdom. God told the young king to ask for whatever he wanted. He asked for wisdom. God gave it, and Solomon became the wisest man ever to live. His pronouncement, “The LORD gives wisdom,” is definitive advice about where true wisdom is found.

Modern technology puts information at our fingertips, but not all information gives wisdom. God is the ultimate wisdom-giver, and He has provided that wisdom through His Word—our reliable source for wise living. Feeding on it daily delivers the insight we need to face life’s challenges in a godly way. Teachers, preachers, books, podcasts, and videos can also be good sources of spiritual information, but nothing can replace the primary source. We need the wisdom of God’s Word daily.

**Father,** I look to You for wisdom to face the many challenges of life. In Jesus’ name, amen.

.....  
 August 7–13. **Martin Wiles** is a Christ-follower who is also a teacher, pastor, freelance editor, author, husband, father, and grandfather. He has authored seven books and his work has appeared in numerous publications.

## The Keys to Happiness

**Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven** (Matthew 5:3).

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:3-12

**Song:** “It Is Well”

Our ideas about happiness often vary. Some people feel they must have many material possessions, comforts, and amusements to achieve happiness, while others feel happy with much less. Still others search for happiness in relationships. But at times people will disappoint us—even those closest to us.

The verses that make up today’s passage are known as the Beatitudes, and Jesus begins each one with the word *blessed*. *Blessed* can be translated “happy,” but we don’t normally associate happiness with the items on Jesus’ list. That’s because His ways are not like our ways. True happiness is not tied to circumstances but to a mindset of pursuing God’s kingdom above all else.

As His followers, we recognize that we are spiritually poor without Christ in our lives. When we sin or fail God in some way, we immediately confess our shortcomings. We take on the cloak of humility, not pride. Our aim in life entails walking a godly path of righteous living. Recognizing God’s mercy toward us, we meet others with kindness. We strive to think pure thoughts. Knowing we live in a world of turmoil, we seek to bring peace between us and others. Finally, we can expect persecution when we stand for Christ. Jesus affirms that doing these things will usher in a life that is blessed by God, which is ultimate happiness.

**Father**, give me the strength to embrace Your way to happiness and not my own or anyone else’s. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Be a Saltshaker

**You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything** (Matthew 5:13).

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:13-20

**Song:** “This Little Light of Mine”

Some folks know what a reduced-salt diet tastes like. Physical challenges or preemptive health precautions are common reasons people consume less salt. Typically, salt is added to food to enhance flavor or to preserve it. But salt can be also be destructive. For example, pouring rock salt where plants or grass are growing will kill them. In ancient times, conquering armies often salted their enemies' lands so they would remain barren and desolate.

Jesus did not tell believers they should be salt and light or that He wished they would be. Rather, He said we *are* these things. The question is, how effective are we as salt and light? Being these things is somewhat like our reputation. We have a reputation whether we want one or not; similarly, our Christian example and influence on the world around us is a reality, for better or worse.

To be beneficial as salt and light in God's kingdom, we need to be intentional. God will provide the courage, faith, and wisdom we need, but we must pray for, look for, and then seize the opportunities God sends us. As we do, we'll be amazed by what He does through us to illumine and flavor the world around us for His glory.

**Father**, send me opportunities to be Your hands and feet of love in this world. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Pursue the Peacemaker

**You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you** (Isaiah 26:3).

**Scripture:** Isaiah 26:1-11

**Song:** “I’ve Got Peace like a River”

He walked into the church early one Sunday morning as the minister and the music director prepared for the service. But he hadn’t come to worship. He came seeking prayer . . . and peace. As the minister listened, the man told of his troubles. His marriage would end the next day. He had been running from the Lord for decades. But that morning, while on his way home from work, “something” told him to stop at the church. The minister comforted him, empathized with him, and prayed for him. The troubled man found the peace for which he was searching.

For the prophet Isaiah, God was a rock who smoothed the way for anyone who followed Him but who brought judgment on those who rebelled against Him. No peace exists for those who reject Him, but peace comes to those who trust Him and then walk in His commands.

Most people desire peace, not turmoil. Peace, however, often eludes us because we define it incorrectly or search for it in the wrong places. Peace is not tied to money, possessions, power, people, or pleasant circumstances. Peace comes from a relationship with Christ. In Him, we find forgiveness of our sins, strength to face whatever life delivers, and hope of an eternity in the perfect peace of God’s presence. Have you discovered the true meaning of peace?

**Father,** I seek Your provision of surpassing peace today. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Wowed by the Word

**He read it aloud from daybreak till noon. . . . And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law** (Nehemiah 8:3).

**Scripture:** Nehemiah 7:73–8:3, 5-6, 9-12

**Song:** “Word of God, Speak”

Since I was elementary age, I have been wowed by the Bible. Before I could read it, I listened as my dad and my Sunday school teachers taught it. Even through my rebellious teenage years, I never neglected God’s Word. Although I didn’t obey much of it for a time, its instructions kept right and wrong before me, and God used that to prod my conscience.

In Nehemiah’s time, the people gathered before the square by the Water Gate to hear Ezra, a teacher of the law, read God’s Word. The Water Gate opened to the east and led to the Gihon Spring, an important source of water for Jerusalem. And as the reading of God’s Word provided water for their spiritual thirst, revival broke out, and they responded with worship.

A daily dose of God’s Word keeps God’s truth and instruction before us. When we take reading a step further by memorizing verses, we store those truths in our hearts. God will use those words to continually remind us of His principles that guide our actions, attitudes, and words. In turn, these reminders help us live a God-honoring testimony before others. As we are wowed by God’s Word and walk in its ways, God will wow us by what He does through us.

**Father,** thank You for turning my heart again and again toward the reading and study of Your Word. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Love's To-Do List

**Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good** (Romans 12:9).

**Scripture:** Romans 12:9-21

**Song:** “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us”

Some marriages—including my own—are familiar with “honey-do” lists. Typically this is when the wife has a list of items needing attention around the home—things within the husband’s skill set. The wife may give the list to her husband, hoping he’ll complete things in a certain time frame. Unfortunately, however, taking care of things may take longer than it ought to.

The book of Romans is Paul’s great treatise on Christian doctrine, but three-fourths of the way through, he gives a to-do list of practical application—a list that allows believers to demonstrate the authenticity of their faith.

This list, however, can’t be put off and is the work of a lifetime. (1) Put others first. Life isn’t all about us. Jesus said to love others as ourselves. (2) Serve faithfully. God gives us gifts and talents and wants us to use them. (3) Live in hope. We hope for an eternity with our Savior. (4) Pray. It is our lifeline to God. (5) Face affliction bravely. Trials will come throughout our lifetime. (6) Share. Life is lived better with open palms. (7) Take no revenge. Leave vengeance to God. (8) Live peacefully with others. (9) Help our enemies. No sooner do we check off one item than we must repeat it again, but our spiritual life stays in good repair when we continue working on God’s to-do list.

**Father**, as I do what’s on this list today, please demonstrate Your love through me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Consider Others

**It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall** (Romans 14:21).

**Scripture:** Romans 14:10-23

**Song:** “We Pass This Way but Once”

Christlike-behavior emails? I had never heard of them before, but our principal instructed us as teachers to send them out to students. Simply put, we were to commend students who showed consideration for others. It might be for something like helping a fellow student pick up dropped books or picking up a piece of trash on the floor rather than walking by it or opening the door for someone whose hands were full. These should be acts that put others above self.

Paul instructed early believers to consider others where issues around eating and drinking things sacrificed to idols were concerned. Some believers had no problem with it—their consciences allowed them to partake. Others felt it was wrong to consume these things. Being gracious and considerate entailed abstaining from eating or drinking if it harmed the conscience of a fellow believer.

Even for us as believers, it can be difficult to resist getting caught up in the world’s me-first mindset. But Jesus spent His entire ministry modeling servant-leadership to His disciples. Living to serve others in truth and love requires intentionality. We must not only ask God for opportunities, but we must also ask Him to help us see the situations when He sends them. Serving others in this way pleases God, brings us joy, and ministers God’s grace and kindness in a self-centered world.

**Father,** I’ll look for opportunities today to be considerate. In Jesus’ name, amen.