

# **Wisdom Better than Wishing**

**Book 1 of the 1 Month Wiser series  
Kristi Bridges**

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*Wisdom—Better than Wishing*

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## CONTENTS

### INTRODUCTION

- Day 1: Fear?!
- Day 2: Listen to Your Heart?
- Day 3: Guppies in the Hands of a Stingy God?
- Day 4: God is Not Your Dad
- Day 5: Fountains in a Thirsty Land
- Day 6: Buggin' Me!
- Day 7: Wash, Rinse, Repeat
- Day 8: I Want a Time Machine!
- Day 9: Entrez Vous!
- Day 10: The Current Hums
- Day 11: Fred O's Faith
- Day 12: What Did You Just Call Me?
- Day 13: Snarkweek
- Day 14: Valentine's Day or V-Day?
- Day 15: Light Up
- Day 16: Nabal wasn't Able, but the King got the Ring
- Day 17: God Gets Emphatic
- Day 18: Fools Frustrate Friends
- Day 19: Hasty Feet
- Day 20: Robin Hood?
- Day 21: Don't be a Drip
- Day 22: Pass it On
- Day 23: Bilious
- Day 24: Sand and Sense
- Day 25: Call Me Ace
- Day 26: Who You Calling' a Fool?
- Day 27: Abandonment and Crabs
- Day 28: Pounding Rain
- Day 29: Bo, the Scorpion King
- Day 30: Who is It?
- Day 31: Not Just the Chick Chapter

## INTRODUCTION

“STOP!”

My friend’s foot hit the brake, just in time to miss a mattress which came flying through the air out of nowhere. She was driving alone.

Hearing God’s audible voice is as common as missing a flying mattress. It is possible to hear God speaking to your heart as you follow His direction in your life. I’ll pause right here to say that in an effort not to call our Creator and the Lover of our souls “It,” we have traditionally called God “Him.” Jesus referred to Him as “Father,” The God who created men, women, stars and planets transcends every gender role. He is a person. He has a personality. He thinks differently than you or I. He made you for a relationship. It takes a little work to understand Him.

Why? If God wants to speak to us, why does He not just say, “Hey Kristi, let me tell you what the stock market’s going to do next week”? Well, besides the fact

God wouldn’t be caught doing Insider Trading, think about this: 1,971 years after the date we call Christ’s birthday,

scientists discovered things called Place Cells; tiny cells in the brain which mark your location. 44 years later we discovered grid cells, head direction cells, theta cells and a range of others which get you from the couch to the kitchen. If your head is spinning, then you can believe someone pretty clever designed this stuff. We take forever to figure out one thing God made, so even though we feel grown up, we are toddlers learning to understand an adult.

It’s humbling and a little uncomfortable to look at ourselves in that light, but give it a second. I’m not saying we are stupid or incompetent. We are just learning the language, stepping into new concepts God fully grasps. It is expected that we will misunderstand Him sometimes. It doesn’t mean He’s not talking, and it doesn’t mean we are better off on our own, living out our days as toddlers. We may be learning the language, but we are not orphans, running around with dried oatmeal on our chins while the Person in charge sits at a desk playing on His phone. We are kids, growing up in this amazingly engineered house with a Parent who not only loves us but has tons of stuff to show us. As adorable as babies are, most parents don’t dream *of* babies—they have dreams *for* their babies. They talk to their babies while they are still in the womb. They get excited when those fetus feet kick back in recognition. God digs that stuff too. He wants to take us to work with Him, but the fun begins right here where we learn to walk and talk.

I’m going to stop right here and say if you don’t know your Creator and aren’t currently in a relationship with the One who really, really wants to show you a life you have never imagined, please take this moment right now and say something like this:

*God, I’m taking some steps of faith. I haven’t thought much of you until now, either because I’ve been hurt or disillusioned, or because I just wasn’t impressed with the ads. Right now, I’d like to start getting to know You as a person. I don’t want to be judged by my style or age or other appearances, and I certainly don’t want to be judged by who I’m related to, so I’m choosing not to judge You by Your kids or appearances. Instead, I’ll talk to You directly and explore Your work, so I can see what You’re really like. Lead me in this, please. I can already tell You love me, because they say You poured Yourself into a body You knew we would do horrible things to, just so we could hear You better for a little while and see You have the power to save us. We could not see how we get carried away until blood is on our hands. If You hadn’t taken the punishment for an entire world full of selfishness, I wouldn’t have had a chance.*

*I can think of a few times I've needed saving. The whole concept of Jesus dying for my sins and rising again doesn't really fit into my brain, but since it took us millennia to figure out how our brains navigate, I'm willing to accept that You have done a lot that doesn't yet make sense to me. I'm putting my trust in You and accepting what Jesus did so that I could know You. I want to learn how to hear You. In Jesus' Name, amen.*

Let's get started. What does God sound like? Henry Blackaby, author of *Experiencing God* says God speaks to us through the Bible, prayer, circumstances and the church. Circumstances and other people who are led by God can confirm or clarify what we believe we are hearing through the Bible and prayer. I highly recommend finding a congregation of people who pray and believe the grace and wisdom and power of God changes lives. As for the Bible and prayer, join me as we go through the book of Proverbs over the next 31 days. Proverbs is an Operating Manual for humans. After the first time through, you will probably return to Proverbs many times in your life. It overflows with wisdom. I recommend starting on the first day of the month. I prefer reading in the morning, so I can watch God work all day, but please feel free to read at whatever time fits your schedule best.

Each day:

- Pray, "Lord, clear my mind of distractions. Guide me to what You are saying today and help me keep my eyes open to see how You use Your word in my life."
- Read the full chapter of Proverbs in the Bible, which matches the date. I use several versions in my studies, so don't fret if the Bible you're reading doesn't exactly match. It should be similar. Next to each verse, I will add the abbreviation for the version I am quoting. Here are the ones I have used:  
 NKJV: New King James Version  
 NIV: New International Version  
 NLT: New Living Translation  
 ESV: English Standard Version
- Read the chapter of this book which corresponds with the day's chapter. We will discuss a verse or two, pray together and look for what God is doing in our lives.

I've prayed over these verses for you, and I look forward to hearing about your journey:  
***Ephesians 5:16 NLT*** *I pray that from His glorious, unlimited resources He will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. 17Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. 18And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. 19May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.*

## Day 1: Fear?!

*Proverbs 1:7 NIV The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

Over 100 times in the Bible, God said, “Fear not.” So why does the Bible talk about fearing God? 2 Timothy NKJV says, “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” What’s up with this Proverb? Let’s examine what kind of fear is referenced here.

**Is your stomach churning?** That’s probably not God. What do you fear? Disaster? Loneliness? Violence? Losing your job? Sliding back into old habits? There are things which absorb our attention and take our eyes off God. Paul’s letter to Timothy spoke the truth. The churning in your stomach and those racing thoughts as you try to sleep are replaced with power and love and mental health as you focus on God and trust in Him. This world holds nothing deserving of our fear, because God is bigger than any bogeyman in the world.

**Recognize, respect, overcome.** From childhood we whistle in the dark, puff up our chests and talk tough in order to avoid being afraid. We are trained to think fear of any sort is bad. I personally love the Nike® sportswear motto, “No Fear.” But any soldier, fireman or successful entrepreneur will tell you there is a healthy kind of fear, a respect which allows you to assess and hopefully overcome the dangers in a situation. Lives are destroyed by seemingly harmless decisions people make. We easily entangle ourselves in physical and spiritual messes. I’m reminded of a line from “Amazing Grace.” John Newton wrote, “’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved.” The wisdom in Proverbs and in the rest of the Bible makes us recognize the danger we are in when we follow appetite and instinct. God is big, so we give Him our respect and expect Him to lead us through.

**Keep your paws off the exhaust.** I imagine God waking me up on Christmas morning and whispering with a grin, “Hey, c’mere, got something to show you.” I follow Him in my donkey slippers out to the garage where He has a bike ready to assemble. He teaches me how to do it. Sometimes I ask for a tool and He says, “What’s it called?” because He is teaching me. Moments like this are going to be important when He teaches me how to build my own hotrod—and drive it. God works with us like that. The fun compounds as the relationship matures.

First, I have to listen. As I grow and learn, it is tempting to get ahead of Him. God is always working to accomplish good through people and circumstances in every direction. We can be part of His work and be protected because we are at His side, or we can get in the way. No matter how much He loves me and wants to protect me, if I stick my hand on the exhaust pipe when He’s welding it onto my minibike, I’m going to get burned. Like a good Father, God will scoop us up and comfort us if we let Him, but it’s better if we just listen and follow directions.

I have to shake my head at people who get mad at God when life hurts, because they miss a real blessing. Let Him help, let Him kiss it better. Stay in step with God, get to know Him and talk to Him about everything. You will learn the time to fear God is when you are not in step with Him. You can always trust that God loves you and wants to bless you. Just stick by His side.

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*Thank You, Lord, for being Someone we can know.  
Thanks for being Someone who loves us and works for our good. Chase away our earthly fears  
and remind us how big You are. Keep our ears open so we can learn what You are teaching and  
not get burned along the way. We love You!*

What does Proverbs 1 mean to you today?

1. What fear do you need replaced by God's power, love and sound mind?
2. What hurt have you held against God? Tell Him—you won't offend Him. Give it to Him and let Him hold you and kiss it better.
3. Write down the verse in Proverbs which stood out to you as you read today's chapter.
4. Keep your eyes open today to see how God demonstrates what He's teaching you.

## Day 2: Listen to Your Heart?

*Proverbs 2:9 NIV Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path.*

Oh, I know how to hear God! I just listen to my heart. Although “Listen to Your Heart” was a great ‘80s song, the heart is far from reliable when it comes to Godly living. My father was a brilliant mechanic, deep thinker and avid examiner of his own heart. He studied people, asked penetrating questions, searched to find the right way and followed his heart through seven divorces. The heart goes astray. Jeremiah 17:9 NIV says, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure.” Thankfully, God changes hearts.

People who have followed God for years find their lives upside down with wounded people all around. Their hearts have driven them to make decisions out of line with what God says.

*Proverbs 2:6 NKJV For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; 7He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; 8He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints.*

No matter how long you walk with God, there will be times when your heart will feel pulled in another direction. Store up wisdom in your heart, and make righteous living as automatic as you possibly can. If you make a regular habit of studying the Bible and memorizing key verses God shows you, He will bring them to you when your willpower needs fortification and the way before you is unclear.

Prayer is another important thing. In the movies, people rarely pray when they should. There is often one person who tries prayer like I buy lottery tickets—one desperate act every 10 years or so, just in case. Have you ever known someone who disappeared from your life and didn’t return your calls? One day, you get a call which starts with a feeble attempt to catch up and ends with a request for cash? How much do you want to help that person? Do you think you’ll invite them over to play with your expensive gaming system?

On the flip side, have you ever seen friends who don’t even speak in full sentences because they know all the lines from some movie they both love, or they have hung out so much one always knows where the other is going and leapfrogs to the finish?

Prayer is like that. God’s bigger than we can imagine, and He can handle seven billion people even if we all talk at once. Our arms are shorter than His, so our prayers are often, “Would you please reach that for me?” Yet if we keep reading the Bible and praying, we begin asking questions like, “Why did You do that?” and “What are You wanting me to see here?” and “Hey, would you touch that other person? They should know You, too.”

In Psalm 139:1 NIV, Solomon’s dad David said, “You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. 2You know when I sit and when I rise; You perceive my thoughts from afar. 3You discern my going out and my lying down; You are familiar with all my ways. 4Before a word is on my tongue You, Lord, know it completely.” God knows what we are thinking, but the act of communicating our thoughts is an act of relationship. When we pray, we focus our attention on the Source of all our answers, and we expect Him to answer us with wisdom, power, peace and clarity.

*Proverbs 2:10 NIV Wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. 11Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.*

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*Lord, thank You for the protection that comes with following Your ways. Knowing You really is pleasant to my soul. Keep talking to me, and strengthen my spirit so I walk in righteousness no matter what.*

What does Proverbs 2 mean to you today?

1. Has there been a time when your heart made a mess of your life? Can you see where God did just what He promises in Romans 8:28 NIV? “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.” God doesn’t waste even the mistakes we make. He is never surprised, although He wants us to do right. He works all things out for our good, turning them into opportunities for us to know Him better and become stronger in character.
2. Give the Lord any heaviness or bitterness you still harbor from that mistake and thank Him for doing His healing work in your heart.
3. Write down the verse in Proverbs which stood out to you as you read today’s chapter.
4. Keep your eyes open today to see how God demonstrates what He’s teaching you.

### Day 3: Guppies in the Hands of a Stingy God?

*Proverbs 3:5 NIV Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.*

A little girl asked her mom for three M&M® candies. Her mom said, “Would you like five instead?”

“NO!” the child demanded. “I want THREE!!!” She didn’t yet know what five was, but Mom did. We pray and pray and think God isn’t listening. Encapsulated in these bodies, we are able to see a few hundred feet in front of us. If we turn towards one direction, we lose sight of the other. We are able to see what has already happened and make only suppositions or wishes about what will happen tomorrow, based on a really tiny realm of experience. We have the perspective of a guppy in the Mariana Trench.

JennRene Owens says in her book, *Red Sea Situations*:

- If you struggle with perspective and faith, look inside and see what God is trying to change.
- Self-pity encapsulates your mind and then your heart into believing that what you are thinking is actually truth.

God is not stuck in a body living in a fixed point in time. He works in every direction at once, making connections and coming up with plans we’d never know were possible. A book which defines much of my spiritual understanding, *Experiencing God*, urges us to acknowledge that our experiences do not always tell us the truth. Truth is a Person, and He is eternal and enormous. The disciples, tossed at sea, thought the truth was, “We’re going to die!” The Truth was Jesus, and he was in the boat with them. He woke and calmed the storm. They thought the truth was that the Messiah would reign in an earthly kingdom like Caesar had, sometime soon, and they watched stunned as their Messiah was crucified. They didn’t realize until He had risen from the dead and spoken with them that God had bigger plans than one more guy imposing taxes and carrying a scepter. They came to know the Truth in stages—by watching Him minister in His 30s, by meeting the Holy Spirit after Jesus had ascended, and by seeing life after life changed when they spoke the Truth and hearts opened up.

What encapsulates you or boxes you in right now? Are you accepting any of the following as truth?

- I’ve worked too hard to get where I am to lose it all.
- Nobody will help me. I pray and God does nothing.
- I take one step forward and two steps back.
- I would be the happiest person in the world if I could have/do/keep/prevent...

If you feel like you are banging your head against the wall, see if the doorway is on another wall. The Lord may be redirecting you. He may be trying to give you more than the THREE! you are demanding. He has so much to show you. Do you need to let go of something you are clutching now or grasping for? Do you need to let go of the assumption that life will be over if you don’t have what you are accustomed to?

That is a tough one—how far down can we go before we give up hope? We don’t give up hope.

God is not stingy. He does not ask for our devotion and give us misery. Nor does He give us the keys to something we would instantly wreck in our ignorance. He asks for our love and trust and then gives us more than we could ask or imagine, while working with us side by side to develop our skills and character for what is coming. Sometimes He removes distractions so we

can focus, because what He's showing us is that important. His imagination is bigger than ours, and much more fulfilling.

In 2 Kings 6, Elisha and his servant woke one morning and found that they were surrounded by the army of an angry king, whose battle plans Elisha had been wrecking. His servant was terrified by what he saw, but Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see." The servant looked around and saw that the hills were full of a fiery, heavenly army. God's army not only protected Elisha and his servant, but also the soldiers who had been sent to attack them. At the end of the day, those men were sent home to their families and the king who sent them stopped raiding Israel. I wish all our battles were fought this way.

As I said that, I could almost hear someone try to wall God in with, "That just wouldn't work." And so it goes—as we examine who God is and He opens our eyes to bigger possibilities than we've previously known, our limited experience says, "No, that wouldn't work." Those are the times we need to examine what we are currently accepting as truth, and then we need to hang out with God, asking for our eyes to be opened to what God is doing so we can join in and experience all that He wants for us.

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*Lord, today help me to recognize the difference between my human abilities and few years on earth don't compare to Your universe-generating abilities and eternal lifespan. You are the Lord of my life and I choose to trust You. Help me to find peace in the work You give me and wait patiently until You show me what You're up to. I love You. In Jesus' Name, amen.*

What does Proverbs 3 mean to you today?

1. Do you feel that you have searched all the walls in your situation without finding any doors? Tell God about that. Maybe you've told Him, but open up the conversation again.
2. Refocus your attention on God's face instead of His hands. Decide to trust His timing, because delays are not always about you. Don't worry—God won't waste any of this time.
3. Write down the verse in Proverbs that stood out to you as you read today's chapter.
4. Keep your eyes open today to see how God demonstrates what He's teaching you.