

Aware II: Hearing God's Voice
Hearing God through Wisdom
August 7, 2011

You'll be singing that all afternoon. I've been singing it all weekend in anticipation of this moment. Actually, I really love that song because it's true in so many ways. All of us are constantly making mistakes in our lives – sometimes little ones, sometimes really big ones. And even though most of us have been on this planet for 20 or 30 or 50 or even 70 years, we're still "new souls in a strange world" trying to figure out how to live our lives in the best way possible.ⁱ And one of the things we really need in order to do that ... is wisdom.

And wisdom, as Shannon said, is one of the ways in which God speaks to us. Actually, I should say that wisdom is one of the lesser-

appreciated and lesser-understood ways in which God speaks to us. Most of us are aware that God will speak to us through the Bible – whether it’s reading it on our own or hearing biblical truth proclaimed by a spiritually-gifted communicator or in studying it together with others. Most of us are aware that God will speak to us through the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit who we have if we’re followers of Christ, convicting us and guiding us into all truth. But few of us realize that wisdom is as significant of a communication channel from God as any others.

I think that’s because wisdom doesn’t have a very “spiritual” feeling to it. It typically doesn’t have the sense of urgency of a divine prompting from the Holy Spirit. It doesn’t have the drama associated with the biblical story of God’s efforts to redeem all of creation (including you and me) or the

intensity of a "thou shalt not."

Instead, wisdom is kind of just "there" waiting to be discovered; waiting to be sought after.

*Tune your ears to wisdom
and concentrate on
understanding. Cry out for
insight and ask for
understanding. Search for
them as you would for silver;
seek them like hidden
treasures. Proverbs
2:2-4 (NLT)*

Wisdom may not feel as spiritual as God speaking through the Bible or through the Spirit, however, I think the case could be made that wisdom is just as important as either of those and maybe even *more* important. I say that because, quite often, God does not give us direct personal guidance on every issue in our lives.

For instance:

- Should you take a job in another town (like the gal in the drama)? God may or may not speak directly to you on that.
- Should you put your children in preschool or should you keep them at home a little longer?
- Should you buy a new car or fix up your old one? God might give you a strong prompting through the Spirit on those issues – or He might not.

Remember, as we've talked about on several occasions, God's will is more like a game plan than a blueprint. He's not interested in directing our every little move. He is always speaking to us, but He is not always *directing* us in every matter ... even in some of the "big" matters.

Hudson Taylor, one of the greatest missionaries who ever lived (his work in China led to millions of Chinese becoming Christians - followers of Jesus) wrote that in his younger days as a Christian, things used to come to him very clearly. The Lord would often speak to him and guide him in very specific ways.

“But,” he wrote, “as I have gone on, and God has used me more and more, I seem often to be like a man going along in a fog. I do not know what to do.”

That’s amazing: in his later years, when he was responsible for leading a thousand missionaries in China, he did not hear God speaking as much as he did when he first started out! Why? Because, having matured in his walk with God, the Lord trusted *him* to make the right decisions.

That's how it works with our kids, isn't it? When they're young, we have to tell them everything. But, as they grow older, if they have been trained well and they have learned, then they will be able to make good decisions on their own. We don't need to tell them everything.ⁱⁱ

In the same way, God doesn't need to direct us on every issue. That's where wisdom comes in.

**Wisdom will speak to us when the Bible
and the Spirit do not.**

Wisdom is what we listen to and what we rely on when God does *not* speak to us through the other avenues of communication. Or, as Christian author Joyce Meyer puts it: "The audible voice of God is not needed when wisdom is already shouting ..."ⁱⁱⁱ

And wisdom, according to the Bible, is shouting. Proverbs chapter 8 says ...

*Does not wisdom call out?
Does not understanding raise
her voice? At the highest
point along the way, where
the paths meet, she takes her
stand; beside the gate
leading into the city, at the
entrance, she cries aloud:*

*"To you, O people, I call out; I
raise my voice to all
mankind. You who are
simple, gain prudence; you
who are foolish, set your
hearts on it. Listen, for I have
trustworthy things to say;*

*"Choose my instruction
instead of silver, knowledge
rather than choice gold, for
wisdom is more precious
than rubies, and nothing you
desire can compare with
her." Proverbs 8:1-11*

(NIV)

What is Wisdom?

Obviously, then, the first question we have to answer is "what exactly is wisdom?" There are lots of ways to think about wisdom, and I'm sure you've heard many definitions of this before, but, I want to give you several that are biblically based so that we can think about this and then we'll land on one that I think best summarizes it all together.

The first definition is from wisdom itself. Remember, wisdom is speaking in Proverbs Chapter 8, and in the next few verses of it, this is what we read ...

"I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence (which means being reasonable and responsible); I possess knowledge and discretion (I

know where to draw the line)
... *Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have insight, I have power.*

"By me kings reign and rulers issue decrees that are just; by me princes govern, and nobles—all who rule on earth." Proverbs 8:12, 14-16 (NIV)

Wow – prudence, knowledge, discretion, sound judgement, and insight – a powerful combination of qualities that are all wrapped together. That's one way to define wisdom.

Taking that a step further and refining it a bit
...

... theologian J.I. Packer defines it this way:

"Wisdom is the power to see, and the

inclination to choose, the best and highest goal, together with the surest means of attaining it. Wisdom is, in fact, the practical side of moral goodness.”

Along the same lines, A.W. Tozer writes that

...

“Wisdom, among other things, is the ability to devise perfect ends and to achieve those ends by the most perfect means.

Wisdom sees everything in focus, each in proper relation to all, and is thus able to work toward predestined goals with flawless precision.”

That’s a lot of words there but I think a great example of both that definition and Packer’s is found in 1 Kings Chapter 3, which says that one day, two women came to King Solomon.

The first one said, "This woman and I live in the same house and we each gave birth to a son last week. And one night last week while she was asleep, she rolled over on her son and she smothered him. So she got up at midnight and took my living son from me while I slept and left me with her dead son. When I woke in the morning and looked closely I could tell this was not my son."

But the other woman said, "No, the living child is mine and the dead child is yours." And so the Bible says they argued before the king.

After listening for a while, Solomon said, "You both say the living child is yours. I will settle the matter; bring me a sword" and, so, a sword was brought and the king said, "Divide the child in two. Give half to one woman and half to the other."

At this the woman whose son was dead said, "Sounds fair to me. Go ahead" ... while the other woman whose son was alive panicked and said, "No, my lord, let her have my child!"

Then the king said, "Give the child to this woman. She is its mother."

The story concludes with this observation:

*All Israel heard of the judgment which the king had rendered and they stood in awe of the king because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him, to render justice. 1 Kings 3:28
(NIV)*

See, there was no Bible verse to tell Solomon "what to do whenever two women claim the same baby!" Instead, *wisdom told him.*

Through wisdom, he was able to see all the factors in focus; how all the pieces had to fit together – that the real mother would plead for the life of her child – and he was therefore able to work toward the best and highest goal with the surest means of attaining it.

One more way of defining wisdom is to consider how it relates to the qualities of knowledge and understanding, two words that pop up in the Bible, over and over. And I think the best way to think of it is this way:

- Those with knowledge are able to collect, remember, and access information and data.
- Those with understanding are able to abstract the meaning out of that information. (In Hebrew, the word translated “understanding” actually

comes from a word that means to separate things out mentally and to distinguish the different parts). People with understanding see beyond the trees to the forest; they see the principles behind the knowledge.

- And those with wisdom choose *the correct principle to apply now*. They know what to do next; they know which way to go. They do the right thing (in contrast to the many people who have great knowledge and understanding, but consistently do the wrong thing).^{iv}

A great example of this, again from the Old Testament ...

Saul, the first king of Israel, was dead and there was a disagreement over who should succeed him. Most of the tribes believed it should be David. The tribe of Benjamin did

not. It was a very tense time and there was a need for great wisdom in the land of Israel.

The Bible says that day after day, men came to help David, until he had a great army, like the army of God. And it actually lists out all of the men and the tribes from which they came ...

... including the tribe of Issachar.

There were 200 leaders of this tribe with their relatives (so maybe 1,000 men altogether). All these men understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take. 1 Chronicles 12:32 (NLT)

See it? Knowledge led to understanding and understanding led to wisdom – knowing what should be done right now (which was to follow David and make him king, which is

what happened and is what history proved to be the right move).

So, if you want to put all that together and come up with a definition of wisdom, I think one that would summarize everything we've learned so far in this message might look like this:

Wisdom is the correct application of knowledge and understanding in situations where God is not speaking directly through the Bible or the Spirit.

Let me say that again. A lot of words.

Wisdom is the correct application of knowledge and understanding in those situations where God is not already speaking directly through the Bible or the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Now, here's how this works out in real life:

You don't need wisdom, for instance, to tell you to work on your marriage instead of quitting when it gets hard. You don't need wisdom to tell you to be generous with your money. You don't need wisdom to tell you that you need to make participation in the body of Christ – the church – a priority if you're a Christian. Though all of those things are very wise, God has already spoken – and is still speaking – to those issues through the Scripture.

And you don't need wisdom to tell you to repent if the Spirit convicts you that your attitude towards your husband or wife is wrong. You don't need wisdom to tell you to work on your budget if the Spirit is convicting you that you're selfish with your money. You don't need wisdom to tell you that serving in the ministries of the church is a good idea if the Spirit is prompting you to volunteer in

children's ministry. Though all of those things are very wise, God is already speaking to you through the Spirit and you would be foolish to ignore Him.

What wisdom will tell you is how (and when) to begin working on your relationship with your spouse. It will tell you where and how much to reduce your spending and your saving and where and how much you should give. It will tell you which small group or which area of ministry service best fits your personality and your gifts and your talents. That's not to say that the Holy Spirit won't prompt in these areas but more often than not, God expects his children to make those kinds of decisions based on wisdom.

Obviously, then, this is why the Bible implores us, beseeches us and, as we read earlier, shouts to us to get wisdom. *Get wisdom.*

How to Become Wise

... which then leads us to the next question: *how?* How do we get this kind of wisdom that knows what God wants us to do in situations where He is not directly speaking to us?

Fortunately for us, the Bible is very clear on how we can get it – how we can become a wise person. I want to share this with you and as I do, I want you to realize this is going to sound like a step by step process but it's not really, because there isn't such a thing. Rather, there is a set of qualities that exist in a person that will produce wisdom in that person.

1. The first and foremost quality of wise men and women is that they fear God.

They fear God.

*Fear of the LORD is the
foundation of wisdom.
Knowledge of the Holy One
results in good judgment.
Proverbs 9:10 (NIV)*

The same thought is repeated in the Psalms.

*The fear of the LORD is the
beginning of wisdom; all who
follow his precepts have
good understanding. Psalm
111:10 (NIV)*

So, the first and foremost quality of wise men and women is that they fear God.

But what does that mean? Sounds kind of scary. Well, it is kind of scary. The first place we read about it is in the story of the Exodus of Israel from Egypt when Moses goes up to Mt. Sinai to get the 10 Commandments from God. The Bible says that,

When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die."

Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning." Exodus 20:18-20 (NIV)

Now wait a minute, that's kind of confusing. "Don't be afraid. You're just being tested. And you pass the test only if you don't fear. Yet God desires that the fear of Him always be with you. You pass the test by fearing the Lord." Kind of weird.

The fear that Moses was telling them to get rid of was the fear of coming close enough to God to hear his voice. The fear that Moses wanted them to keep in mind was that God is powerful and He is opposed to sin.

Commenting on this passage, John Piper writes:

Fearing the Lord *means fearing to run away from him*. It means fearing to seek refuge, and joy, and hope anywhere else but in God. It means keeping before our eyes what a fearful prospect it is to stop trusting and depending on God to meet our needs. ^v

Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Not fear of getting close to God, but fear of running away from God. That's the beginning of wisdom.

2. The second characteristic of wise men and women is that they ask God for wisdom.

Again, the book of Proverbs teaches us:

The LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Proverbs 2:6,9-10 (NIV)

So, if we want wisdom, we should pray for it.

The Apostle James states it clearly:

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you (he will not make

*fun of you) for asking.
James 1:5 (NLT)*

So, fear God (specifically what will happen if you run away from Him) ... ask God ...

3. Third quality ... wise men and women develop a Christ-oriented worldview.

In other words, they begin to think about things, they begin to look at life, the way God thinks about life, the way God looks at life.

They put into practice what Paul says when he writes:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:2 (NIV)

Transformed – changed – by the renewing of your mind. That happens as we begin to read His word for ourselves, as we hear it proclaimed by spiritually-gifted communicators, as we study it with others.

As I said before, God is not interested in directing our every move and our every decision. Instead, what God is trying to do with you and me, is to get our decision-making processes trained in such a way that we follow in His way naturally. Christ-oriented worldview.

4. Fourth, wise men and women surround themselves with other wise men and women.

And this is very clear throughout the Proverbs:

He who walks with the wise

*grows wise. Proverbs 13:4
(NIV)*

*The way of fools seems right
to them, but the wise listen to
advice. Proverbs 12:15 (NIV)*

*Listen to advice and accept
discipline, and at the end you
will be counted among the
wise. Proverbs 19:20
(NIV)*

If you want to be a wise person, you need to have at least a few wise people who have permission to speak into your life; people who themselves are increasing in these qualities we're talking about, because, *their* wisdom will help you to become wise. *Their* counsel will help you to make decisions when God does not speak to you through the Bible or the Holy Spirit, and it will even help you test out what you think you're hearing when He does.

In fact, when Paul writes about the gifts of the Spirit to the church at Corinth, he says that one of the ways God empowers some believers is to give them the ability to speak a word of wisdom to us. Sometimes God tells other people something before he tells us.

There's a great example of this in the Book of Acts. Luke tells us that ...

Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul.

One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them."

Acts 13:1-2 (NLT)

Now, why did the Spirit think it was necessary to tell Simeon, Lucius, Manaen his will for Barnabas and Saul? I don't know. But He did. For some reason, their input into the lives of Barnabas and Saul was necessary.

And it works like that around here, by the way, with this church. We have a group of people called the Advisory Council. Whenever I, and the other pastors, come up with some kind of a thought that we think "this is what God wants us to do; we think this is the wise thing to do," we have people who are wise themselves and they listen to us and they speak into our lives. We expect that God would be speaking to them as well He's speaking to us. In fact, we just did this discernment exercise that some of you participated in. We're trying to figure out - does God give us permission to examine this

option of selling our building and building next door on the ballfield? And a bunch of people got involved in that and we did this discernment exercise, and we were trying to have wisdom from the congregation influence our decision making as leaders. That's how it works, and we need these people who are wise.

By the way ... before we move on ... just a word of caution if you're a person with a word of wisdom for someone else, if you've got that gift or sometimes God gives you that word,

Proverbs also says ...

The words of the reckless pierce like swords but the tongue of the wise brings healing. Proverbs 12:18 (NIV)

If God gives you a word for someone else

(and He probably will; God will give you wisdom to speak into someone else's life), just remember, *it is not a weapon*. It's not licence for you to now become their personal holy spirit. It's not to be delivered to them with a "thus saith the Lord" unless you're willing to be stoned to death if you're wrong (which is what the penalty was for the Old Testament Prophets if they were wrong). It's not to be delivered anonymously. If God gives you a word for someone, He'll give you the courage to speak it and the grace to let the other person deal with what you're saying.

Finally, there is one last, absolutely essential thing to do if you would "get wisdom": you must come to Jesus.

5. Wise men and women have trusted Christ as savior.

Jesus said to the people of his day ...

The queen of Sheba will stand up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, for she came from a distant land to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Now someone greater than Solomon is here (referring to himself)—but you refuse to listen. Matthew 12:42 (NLT)

- Solomon spoke God's wisdom. Jesus is the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24, 30).
- Others had spoken truth; Jesus is the truth.
- Others had pointed the way to life; he is the way and the life (John 14:6).
- Others had given promises, but "all the promises of God find their yes in him" (2 Corinthians 1:20).
- Others had offered God's forgiveness;

Jesus bought it by his death.

Therefore, Paul writes ...

In Jesus lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2:3 (NLT)

To know and love and follow Jesus is to own this treasure of ultimate and eternal happiness. Therefore, the plea to "get wisdom" means first and foremost "Come to Jesus! Come to Jesus!" in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom.^{vi}

See, without Christ redeeming us; making us spiritually alive, we simply do not have the capacity to do any of what I just talked about. All of these qualities are things that God does in our lives, through the power of the Spirit, through the presence of Christ, and we simply say "yes" to them.

Testing Wisdom

So, let's say that because of your relationship with Christ, you are becoming more and more of a person who fears God; you are more and more asking God to give you wisdom; you're renewing your mind with the scripture so that you can understand what God has already revealed; you're surrounding yourself with wise men and wise women – believers who are also growing in these qualities and who are qualified to speak into your life ... if all of these things are in place, can you really be confident that your decisions truly are in accordance with Godly wisdom?

I mean, even with all these qualifications we've talked about, you and I are still sinners. We still have the rebellious nature of Adam within us and it's going to be that way

until Christ returns, so it's possible that you and I could be "off" in our attempts at wisdom ... which is why the Bible tells us to test our wisdom – whether we think of it ourselves or whether it comes from other people around us, who are wise and suggest it to us.

John writes:

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world [many people are saying things that sound really good, but they are not right, they are not from God].

1 John 4:1 (NIV)

Along the same lines, Paul writes ...

Do not treat prophecies with contempt [when people have

words of wisdom for you, don't despise them] *but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject whatever is harmful* [whatever is not from God]. 1

Thessalonians 5:20-21 (NIV)

So, how do you do this? How do you test your wisdom to see if it really does come from God?

Many years ago, a man by the name of Ignatius – St. Ignatius of Loyola – became an expert in this and he actually began to train other Christians in how to do it. And I'm going to grossly oversimplify his work but basically, at one point in his life, Ignatius became very ill. He was sick for a long time and during this long recovery – with lots of time to think – sometimes, he wrote, he would imagine serving God wholeheartedly with his life and other times he would

imagine running away from God and just living according to whatever carnal desire struck him in the moment. And he began to notice something:

While both thought patterns brought to him a sense of delight in the moment (i.e. he could see how both paths would be enjoyable as he was living them), *afterwards* – after he had mentally lived out each scenario – he was conscious of a profound difference. *The running away from God scenario left him feeling dry and discontented; the serving God scenario left him feeling happy and contented. In this way, he wrote, he came to recognize the difference between the demonic and the godly^{vii} ... a difference which is highlighted by the Apostle James with respect to wisdom.*

James writes:

Who is wise and understanding among you? (Do you want to evaluate the wisdom that you have?) Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.

Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit,

impartial and sincere.
James 3:13-17 (TNIV)

Using this scripture and others, Ignatius began to think of discernment – deciding whether or not his wisdom was godly or demonic – in terms of consolation and desolation.

Now, those words probably don't mean a whole lot to us but to Ignatius ...

... consolation meant “an interior movement that lifts up the soul to what is heavenly” ...

... a sense of peace, sincerity, and submission before God; a desire to be merciful and impartial to others and desire to produce a fruitful life for God. Basically, everything that James had just said on the positive side.

Desolation meant “an interior movement

towards what is low and earthly” ...

... sense of discontent, agitation and demandingness; a disordered confusion of mind. Again, what James had described as being earthly wisdom.

Now, what I want to do in the very brief time that remains is to talk about how what Ignatius learned and discovered can be applied to any situation in which God has not already spoken in His Word or is not currently speaking through the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Here's how this works:

1. You make what you believe to be the “wise decision.”

You've got a situation that you're facing; you've got to make a choice - “Am I going to buy this car or that?” “Am I going to sell

this?" "Am I going to do this with the kids?" There is no word from God. There is nothing in the scripture. You make what you believe to be the wise decision. You still ask God for wisdom; you talk it over with wise counselors and whatever else you need to do ... but at some point you say "This is the direction I'm going to go in; This is what I'm going to do."

Then, the second thing you do is ...

2. Bring it to God with open hands.

You say, "God, I'm praying for wisdom. I'm not feeling a prompting from the Holy Spirit, but, here is my plan, but I am open to you changing it if I'm off."

And then you ...

3. Sleep on it.

Literally. You literally put it to rest for a while.

“God, this is what I think I should do ... but I’m open to you changing it. See you in the morning.”

And then when you wake up in the morning, you ...

4. Determine if there is a sense of consolation or desolation.

When you think of what you decided the night before, what you’ve laid before God with open hands, is there a sense of peace, sincerity, and submission before God; is there a desire to be merciful and impartial to others and desire to produce a fruitful life for God?

Or, is there a distancing from God, a sense of discontent, or agitation or demandingness; is there a disordered confusion in your mind after you have slept on it?

Here's the deal,

5. If there is consolation, then move forward and *do not vacillate*.

Be *confident* – “God, I’ve done everything I know to do. I feel consolation, and so, I’m going forward.” And, *do not vacillate*; do not get wishy-washy. Don’t go back and say, “well, maybe I should have ...” No, you go forward and be confident that even if you’re wrong, even if your wisdom is off, God will step in and correct you because you’re His kid.

Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans. The LORD works out everything to its proper end.

Proverbs 16:3-4a (NIV)

Conclusion

Now, I want to close this morning with one more word from Proverbs 8 – from wisdom itself.

“Now then, my children, listen to me; blessed are those who keep my ways. Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not disregard it. Blessed are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. For those who find me find life and receive favor from the LORD. But those who fail to find me harm themselves; and all who hate me love death.” Proverbs 8:32-36 (NIV)

Let's pray together.

God I want to offer up this message to you. I know there are a lot of difficult concepts in this. It's not a simple

message; It's not a simple thought. But, God, you are the one who gives us wisdom and insight, so, I'm going to pray that your Spirit would give wisdom and insight, even into this message.

I pray that some of us, as we've heard this, we've heard that we probably need to become a person who fears God. Not that we need to be afraid to get close to you, but, to fear what it would be like if we left you, if we said we didn't need you anymore. God, some of us need to stop being proud and arrogant, and we need to start asking for wisdom. We need to come to you and say, "God, I need you to make me a person who is wise."

Some of us, God, we can't find wisdom because we don't even know what you say in the first place of what you've

already revealed. So, some of us need to renew our minds with the scripture. So, God, I pray that however that needs to happen – maybe some of us need to say, “I’m reading the Bible every day.” Some of us need to make a commitment, “I’m going to be at church every time the doors are open,” or, “I’m going to listen to every message online,” or, “I’m going to get into a small group. I need to renew my mind.”

God, for some of us, the only counsel we have is kind of like what we saw in the drama. We have people whose wisdom comes from tv shows, from magazines, or from this world, and we need to surround ourselves with wise men and women. And, God, I pray for those of us who are in that situation that you would show us those people.

God, I pray for some of us who *are* those wise men and women. We're too busy. We have too many other agendas when we could be pouring into the lives of other people. Help us to do that.

But, God, probably most important of all – some of us just need to trust Christ, because he is the source of all wisdom. He is wisdom. He is the one crying out, "Come to me."

God, some of us are facing a tough decision, and right now we're trying to figure out what we should do, and maybe we're not hearing your voice. So, God, I pray that you would help us to understand this process of discernment and then follow it so that Jesus would be glorified and we would be satisfied. And we pray that in His name, Amen.

Thank you for being here this morning. We are going to finish this series next weekend, but I want to let you know about a new series which is going to start two weeks from today – Aug 21 – a five week series called *Detox II: Living With Your Losses*.

I think it's going to be a great series, one that you can invite friends and family, who are not church attenders, to participate with us, because in this life, everybody loses ... everybody suffers loss and disappointment in some way. Maybe it's a relationship that comes to an end; maybe it's a job that doesn't work out; maybe it's a business that fails to meet expectations. Maybe it's an unfair situation or a situation where people mistreat us; maybe it's something with our health ... but, in some way or another, everyone loses.

What we're going to do in this series is talk about how to deal with loss and disappointment in a way that keeps those losses and disappointments from becoming toxic to your soul. I'll be honest with you – that's kind of where I was headed earlier this summer. And, some of you know some of the things that have been happening here at the church, and some of the things that I've gone through this year (losing my dog, being one of them) - that's kind of where I was headed until God stepped in to help me. And, so, in this series, I want to share with you what I learned and what I'm learning – and maybe it will be helpful for you as well. So, I just want to make sure that you guys know that's what is coming up in two weeks.

Endnotes

ⁱ I'm referring to Yael Naim's "New Soul" which the band performed just before the message.

ⁱⁱ See <http://www.christianity.co.nz/guide2.htm>

ⁱⁱⁱ Joyce Meyer, *How to Hear from God*

^{iv} See www.acts17-11.com/know.html

^v <http://www.soundofgrace.com/piper81/051081m.htm>

^{vi} Piper

^{vii} See <http://www.theway.org.uk/Back/s027Murphy.pdf>