



listen.

STEPHANIE LITTLE

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Part One

Introduction

"Wait..." I'll never forget when that one little word completely changed my life.

I have never heard the audible voice of God. But there have been times when His voice was so loud in my soul that I thought for sure anyone standing nearby could hear it. How did I know it was the voice of God I heard? Because His voice spoke His Word—the words I heard were from His Word, the Bible. He spoke His truth to my heart in a way that I could not express it to myself. The day I heard the word "Wait," I knew it was from the voice of God.

I was nearing my junior year in college and had my heart set on one thing: the next chapter of my life. It seemed as if every week another one of my friends had turned the page and stepped into that exciting new chapter of engagement and marriage. I, on the other hand, had just turned the page from a relationship with a guy who I realized was "Mr. Right"... for someone else. I found myself crying out to God, asking "Why?" What was wrong with me that I couldn't be one of those girls, walking into my very own fairy tale? Somehow, I felt that because life wasn't moving along as I thought it should, it must mean God wasn't thinking of me. I couldn't have been more wrong.

On that day, as I walked through my empty house pouring out my heart till it was just as empty, God spoke. He said, "Wait. Wait on Me." He went on to say, "Trust Me with all your heart... commit your ways to Me... Rest in Me." I stopped in my tracks and listened. I truly listened. I heard God reassuring me that He was at work in my life. He loved me. He had plans for my life. He was so tender, so kind, so close, as near as a whisper. Of course,

the tears flowed; but this time, my tears were sweet as I realized there was no fear in waiting on a God who is working His plan for my life.

As I thanked God for His reassurance, I let go of my expectations and my desires to be in a place that wasn't quite prepared for me. Just then, I heard the sweetest song playing on the radio in the kitchen. The chorus rang out and filled my heart, "Wait, wait, wait on the Lord..." God gave me a new song, a new contentment and even a new joy.

Since that day, God has called me to lean on Him, to follow Him, to wait on Him in a variety of circumstances. Though each time is different, one thing remains the same. The words I hear Him speak always come from Scripture.

Elisabeth Elliot is a woman who has influenced many through her faithfulness to God. In her book, *God's Guidance*, she wrote about how the evidence of God's leading she saw in the Bible provided assurance that He was leading in her life as well. Her response to His leading was simply to follow. Elisabeth Elliot spent a lifetime following God. She and her husband, Jim, were missionaries in Quito, Ecuador. Jim was called by God to reach out to the Aucas, a violent tribe, living in the rain forest of Ecuador. After giving gifts to the tribe, and seemingly establishing a relationship, Jim, along with four other missionary men, made camp nearby the tribe. On January 8, 1956, the men were attacked and killed by the tribal warriors. Elisabeth and the other wives, along with their children, faced the tragedy of losing their loved ones to a horrible act of violence. God called Elisabeth to minister to the very tribe that had murdered her husband. Elisabeth did what she had done from the beginning of her journey with God, she listened and obeyed. Elisabeth, her young daughter, Valerie, and Rachel Saint, the sister of missionary pilot and fellow martyr, Nate Saint, went to live among the tribe. The women shared the gospel and won many to the Lord. Eventually, even some of the

men who killed the missionaries came to salvation. There is no way a woman would do what Elisabeth Elliot did unless she was certain she heard God's voice leading her.

So, how do we do hear the voice of God? How do we know it is Him speaking and not just our own voice? We'll explore the answers to these questions as we walk through the book of Proverbs. Proverbs is a book filled with the wisdom of God as well as the practical application to follow that wisdom. For the first two weeks, we'll examine God's gift of wisdom, given to His servant, Solomon. For the remaining four weeks, we'll do something different in our study time. We'll take a chapter of Proverbs each day, read it, and dissect it to see what it has to say about God and to our individual walk with Him. We'll spend time in prayer, while also seeking to memorize a verse a week from Proverbs. My prayer for you is by the time we reach the end of the study, you will recognize God's voice, listen to His leading and follow Him wherever He calls you to go. It will be the adventure of a lifetime, an adventure that will last into eternity.

Week One

What would you say if God offered you anything you wanted from Him? Would you ask for wealth, power, or long life? How about a new house, a great vacation or perfect health? While the God of the universe is certainly no genie in a bottle, granting frivolous wishes, this scenario actually happened in the life of one man named Solomon. This week, we'll meet Solomon, along with his parents, David and Bathsheba. We'll see what Solomon asked of God, and learn why you and I should ask for the very same thing. The most important part of our week will be exploring the God who calls each of us to listen as His Word speaks wisdom to our soul.

Solomon was born to one of the most well-known kings of all time. King David is remembered as a giant-killer, gentle shepherd, poet, warrior, loyal friend, and a man after God's own heart. He is also remembered as a man who lied, committed adultery, and murdered the husband of his mistress. Though David sinned greatly, his repentance of that sin was genuine, and God's restoration was gracious. God kept His promise to David. Let's take a look at the promise God made His servant David in 2 Samuel 7:1-17. In this passage, David has a desire to build a house for God. Yet, God has a different desire for the life and legacy of David.

Read the passage and record God's promise to David here:

David's desire was noble, but God's plan for his life was to establish the throne, not build the temple. David's response to God's promise is beautiful—such an example of how we should respond to God's will in our lives. When you have time, come back and read verses 18-29 of 2 Samuel 7.

In 2 Samuel 7:12, God mentioned David's "seed" that would come from his "own body." God promised to establish his throne forever. In this promise, God was speaking of David's son, Solomon, as well as God's own Son, Jesus. Jesus would come from the family line of King David. Although Jesus did not reign from a literal throne as He lived on earth in a physical body, He will reign as King of kings forever.

Luke 1:32-33 says, "He [Jesus] will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

God's promise to David had eternal purpose. Fulfillment of this promise would begin with David's son and carry into eternity with God's Son. Every promise God has made to us carries eternal purpose as well. Because every promise from God is fulfilled in Jesus, we never have to worry that somehow God's promises will ever go unfulfilled. Look at what Paul tells us about God's promises in 2 Corinthians 1:20:

"For all of the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us."

**From the verse above, circle how many promises are fulfilled in Jesus...
Amazing.**

Sadly, after God made this monumental promise to David, David made a series of monumental mistakes. These mistakes opened the door for David to commit the most devastating sins of his life.

David's first mistake was staying home when all of his men went out to battle. We don't know why he made that choice. All we know is he wasn't where he was supposed to be. He was the king and the king was supposed to lead his men to victory on the field. Instead, David fell to defeat in his own home. He lingered too long on his rooftop terrace, when he should have led the charge against the enemy. David saw a woman bathing on her rooftop, could not control his lust, sent for her, slept with her, and sent her back home. Soon after, the woman, Bathsheba, sent word to David that she was pregnant with his child.

In desperation, David brought her husband Uriah home from battle and went through an elaborate scheme to get him to stay the night with his wife so people would believe the child was Uriah's and not David's. Because Uriah was such a noble man, he would not enjoy the company of his wife while his companions were on the battlefield. He slept at the door of the king's house. David tried again the next night, with no success; so he sent Uriah back to the fight. The commander was given instructions to place Uriah at the front line and leave him there to be struck down. Uriah was killed and David married Bathsheba. The promise bearer became an adulterer, a liar, and a murderer.

David carried his secret until the day the prophet Nathan confronted his sin. All at once, David's heart overflowed with conviction and remorse. He did the one thing that would restore him back to a right relationship with God: he confessed his sin in shame and sorrow. God forgave David, but as a consequence of his sin, God took the son born to David and Bathsheba. Darkness seemed to fall on the promise God had made. However, time after

time, we see in Scripture that when we are unfaithful, God remains faithful. God's promise does not rely on our performance. David knew His God is just. 2 Samuel 12 describes David's prayers on behalf of his son. Verse 20 shows his willingness to believe God is good even when his circumstances were heartbreaking:

"So, David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself; and changed his clothes; and went into the house of the Lord and worshipped..."

And in one of the most reassuring moments recorded in Scripture, David indicated that he would see his son again. In verses 22-23 he said,

"While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

God's light dawned. His promise continued. Bathsheba bore another son and David called him Solomon. The prophet Nathan called the baby "Jedidiah," which means "Beloved of the Lord." God chose Solomon to inherit David's throne. What a beautiful example of God's mercy and grace.

Let's stop for a moment and consider the depth of what happened here. God made a promise to use David and his family forever. God certainly knew that David would commit heinous acts of sin. Yet, even after David's heart-rebellion, God accepted the true repentance of His servant and kept His Word completely. This truth is breathtaking. If God would continue to use David after all he did, He will continue to use you and me when we turn to Him in repentance of our own sin.

What is your reaction to God's choice of David?

How does the knowledge of his story affect your understanding of what God will do in your life?

After much drama in the kingdom, recorded in 2 Samuel 13 through 1 Kings 1, David proclaimed Solomon king. After reigning over Israel for forty years, David died, and Solomon advanced to the throne. Solomon witnessed both wise choices and unwise choices made by his father. The leadership Solomon needed to see could only come from God Himself. 1 Kings 3:5-15 records a most unusual interchange between God and Solomon. Read the passage and we'll unpack it together.

What did God tell Solomon to do in verse 5?

From verses 6-7, what do you discover about how Solomon viewed God and how he viewed himself?

In our study of Proverbs, we'll see Solomon is one of the most fascinating, most important men who ever lived. The most important thing about him is found in the statement he made right here in 1 Kings 3:6-7. Solomon saw God for who He is: merciful, loving, forgiving, compassionate, faithful, all-powerful, true, and just.

What other words come to your mind when you think of God? Take a moment to write those words, expressing a whisper of praise to God for who He is as you write.

1 Kings 3:9 contains a life-altering moment for Solomon (and for us as we'll see during our study).

Take a look at this verse below and circle the two things Solomon requested:

"Therefore give to your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?"

God was pleased with Solomon's request. Verses 11-13 from 1 Kings 3 contain His answer to Solomon's response. When I read God's words here, I can't help but think of what Paul said in Ephesians 3:20 about our good, giving God: *"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us..."*

How is God's response to Solomon a demonstration of His character as described by Paul?

God went on to promise Solomon long life if he obeyed God's commands. Solomon became the wisest man to ever live (apart from Jesus); but because he was human, he made many sinful choices as well. Just as we saw with David, God kept His promise of granting wealth and wisdom. Solomon, however, did not always whole-heartedly follow God and His commands, resulting in his death before the age of seventy.

Because our study is about the wisdom of God and how He leads us in that wisdom, we'll focus on how God led Solomon to make wise decisions in his reign over Israel.

Let's end our study this week by considering what God tells us about gaining wisdom in James 1:5-6:

"⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind."

Do you need wisdom today? God tells us we can ask Him for it. He will give wisdom freely, without criticism. Take some time today to ask Him for the wisdom you need. Lay out your situation before Him. Ask Him to show you not only what to do, but how to do it. He will tell you. He will show you the way. He has promised.

Sweet friend, our God is good! He loves His children beyond our comprehension. He doesn't want us to flounder or wander about lost in darkness. He is Light. He wants us to follow Him. Do you know His Son Jesus as Savior? That is the very first step toward wisdom and understanding. If you have never given your life to Jesus, follow Him in salvation today. First, admit to Him you are a sinner and you know you cannot have a relationship with God apart from His Son. Let Him know you accept His free gift of salvation, through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Thank Him that Jesus's sacrifice paid the debt for your sin. Tell Him you want to follow Him for the rest of your life and spend eternity in heaven with Him. You'll never regret it. As a matter of fact, you'll be eternally glad you did. So will I.

See you next week... May His precious blessings fill your days.