

Dear Friend,

There is no doubt that you and I will need wisdom to navigate the rough seas of our present and soon-to-come culture. God promises that His words to us will indeed be "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path" (see Psalm 119:105). However, as you will read in this article, study and knowledge of the Word of God alone, though commendable, will not be enough. History teaches that there needs to be a heart of sincere obedience behind that study.

Many have fallen into the trap of thinking that knowledge alone will keep them secure in perilous times. Paul himself warns of the peril of the last days. Part of the error of those times will be a people who are "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7). This speaks to me of those who are enamored by knowledge, even of God's Word, yet have no heart or passion to follow where it would actually lead them. What a shame to study a lighthouse, yet not follow its leading to safety in the approaching storm!

As the winds and waves of our times increase, may you be founded upon the rock, Jesus Christ, and not fall upon the rocks of this fallen and disobedient society.

With you in the storm,

Pastor Carter Conlon

THE WISEST MAN WHO EVER LIVED by Carter Conlon

"My son, pay attention to my wisdom; lend your ear to my understanding, that you may preserve discretion, and your lips may keep knowledge" (Proverbs 5:1). These words were written by Solomon, King David's son. Solomon—uniquely gifted, touched, and empowered by God—was unlike any other man on the face of the earth.

The book of 1 Kings tells us that the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, "Ask! What shall I give you?" And Solomon said... *'Now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. 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?'*

"The speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. Then God said to him: 'Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding

heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days. So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days" (1 Kings 3:5–13).

What an incredible answer to Solomon's request! There was never a wiser man before or after him. And when God said "lengthen your days," He not only intended for Solomon to live long on the earth, but even after he was gone, his descendants would be like a savor that followed because of the presence of God that emanated through his life.

Now rabbinic tradition holds that Solomon wrote Proverbs 5 when he was middle-aged. At this point, his wealth was the envy of the kings of his day, as he experienced unparalleled success. By this point, he had become familiar with the presence of God and seen prayer answered. There was never a lack of resources, as they came pouring in from all over. The Scriptures tell us, "All King Solomon's drinking vessels were gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Not one was silver, for this was accounted as nothing in the days of Solomon. For the king had merchant ships at sea with the fleet

of Hiram. Once every three years the merchant ships came bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and monkeys. So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom” (1 Kings 10:21–23).

If we are pursuing something that is going to cost us, God will be faithful to bring it back to our attention time and again.

God had touched this man’s life and everything he put his hand to, and now he was writing the inspired text of the Word of God. Actually, I personally do not believe that Solomon was writing to his son, Rehoboam, in Proverbs 5. Rather, I believe God was speaking to Solomon and he was writing it down, for it starts, “My son, pay attention to my wisdom.” In other words, “I am speaking to you because I want to teach you some things. Do not just write these words down and assume it is something I am giving you for other people. Pay attention to it so that at the end of your days, you will not be lamenting the loss of what could have been.”

Remember, God knew Solomon’s future, just as God knows our future. When you and I open the Word of God, He will speak to us about certain things in our lives. If we are pursuing something that is going to cost us, something that will weaken our family or destroy the testimony of God, He will be faithful to bring it back to our attention time and again.

“For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps lay hold

of hell. Lest you ponder her path of life—her ways are unstable; you do not know them” (Proverbs 5:3–6). I believe that God was trying to warn Solomon, “You are falling into a trap, and you think you are smart enough to get out of it. But you do not understand what you are dealing with. You are falling into a seduction, and you assume there will be no consequence to it.”

■ SOLOMON’S END

Sadly, despite the warnings, Solomon died a disillusioned old fool. The book of 1 Kings describes his downfall: “*But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, ‘You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods. Solomon clung to these in love’*” (1 Kings 11:1–2). As a king, Solomon knew what was forbidden in the Scriptures, yet he somehow believed that the rules and warnings did not apply to him. And so he had 700 wives and 300 concubines.

“For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord, as did his father David. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods” (1 Kings 11:4–8).

If only he had heeded the words of warning he had penned in Proverbs 5: “*Therefore hear me now, my children, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Remove your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your honor to others, and your years to the cruel one; lest aliens be filled with your wealth”* (Proverbs 5:7–10). That is exactly what happened—armies that subsequently came into Israel after Solomon’s reign plundered the temple and took away the shields, the gold, and eventually everything—even the vessels.

Spiritual success today does not guarantee success tomorrow.

“And you mourn at last, when your flesh and your body are consumed, and say: ‘How I have hated instruction, and my heart despised correction! I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me! I was on the verge of total ruin, in the midst of the assembly and congregation’” (Proverbs 5:11–14). We see in the book of Ecclesiastes that this is exactly where Solomon finished—on the verge of total ruin. At the end of his life, all he could do was conclude, “*Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun”* (Ecclesiastes 2:11).

Having built the house of God, he finished his days building heathen temples that were an abomination to the Lord. Instead of leaving the glory of God and a strong and mighty people in Israel, he left behind a very weak son and a soon-to-be divided nation.

And so was the end of the wisest man who ever lived—one who had been given the promise of life and wealth and wisdom, one who knew the divine operation of God. If that does not put the fear of God in your heart, nothing will!

■ A BETTER REQUEST

As Solomon's life exemplified, spiritual success today does not guarantee success tomorrow. God must be able to speak to us even when we are living in a time of victory. If only Solomon had not assumed that wisdom was enough to keep him. A lot of people today spend their time studying the Word of God and even acquire multiple degrees. This is commendable, but if you are going to do that, you would be wise to pray for a heart to obey what you are studying! I have known people with far greater knowledge of the Scriptures than I possess finish their lives in an absolute train wreck. Just like Solomon, something in their heart caused them to assume they could embrace certain things and not suffer because of it.

God, don't just give me wisdom, but give me a heart to obey what You teach me.

If only Solomon had stretched his request just a little bit and said, "God, don't just give me wisdom, but give me a heart to obey what You teach me. Give me intelligence in the study of the Scriptures, but give me the heart of my father, David, as well. He was not perfect, but he could be reasoned with and he turned from evil back to good. Oh, God, give me a heart to follow You!"

■ ASK WHATEVER YOU WILL

In the book of John, Jesus spoke words which I am now taking to heart in a new way. "*Most assuredly I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you*" (John 16:23). I consider that word from Jesus to us today to be exactly the same as when God appeared to Solomon and said, "Ask Me for what you want and I will give it to you."

How beautiful to finish life and be able to say; "God, I trusted You; thank You for not letting me go."

Jesus continued, "*Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full*" (John 16:24). To me, "full joy" means that I make it to a victorious end. Oh, how beautiful to finish life and be able to say, "God, I trusted You; thank You for not letting me go. Thank You for helping me to turn in the direction You were calling even when it was the hardest thing I have ever done in my life. Thank You for leading me to forgive when everything in me wanted to hate. Thank You for giving me the courage to walk humbly when others spoke a word of correction into my life. Thank You for giving me a heart to follow You!"

A prayer that I now pray every day is: "Oh, Jesus, let me finish well. Help me to learn from the example of those who have gone before me. Let me not simply assume that everything is right in my life. Keep me diligent, keep me in love with Your Word!" I encourage you to

accept the Lord's invitation to ask this of Him, as well, that we all may finish our lives in the fullness of the joy that He promises!

Carter Conlon

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PAUSING AT SUMMIT

A couple of years ago, in the hustle and bustle of life at Summit, a revolutionary thought occurred to us: we need to pause. Between classes, homework, ministries, outreaches, and events, life can get busy fast. And so, for one week every fall, we pause homework, exams, ministries and after class events. Students are encouraged to walk the fields to pray and spend time with God. Chapels are often extended without a cut-off time so the Lord can speak while we wait. It may seem counterintuitive at a Bible school to stop “doing,” but in fact these times of just “being” in the presence of God without an agenda can be the most productive times of all.

In the cafeteria, I sit with a group of three guys and four girls at a table. They are all seniors who experienced “pause week” at Summit last year. I ask them what their thoughts are about it. Each person has their own personal experience with what the Lord did during that time. All of them are smiling and animated as they share what they feel impacted them the most, and I realize in that moment that carving out time with Christ is not just important, it’s essential. Our students learn so much in the short two years they are here, but this lesson just might be one of the most important of all!



CARTER CONLON

Carter Conlon is senior pastor of Times Square Church, where he has been on the pastoral staff since 1994.

TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

Times Square Church was founded in 1987 by Pastor David Wilkerson, author of “The Cross and the Switchblade.” It is an interdenominational church located in the heart of New York City.

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday 10AM | 1PM | 3PM | 6PM

Tuesday 7PM | Worldwide Prayer Meeting

Friday 7PM | The Gate
2nd & 4th Fridays (ages 18–29)

Live Webcast:
All our Sunday and Tuesday services can be watched live and replayed for seven days on our website.

tsc.nyc

