

Wisdom, Understanding, and a Hearing Heart

September 13, 2026

Pastor Joel Brooks (Summary by OpenAi)

Primary Scripture Texts: Proverbs 4:7–8; Proverbs 1:1–7; 1 Kings 3:5–12

Central Theme: Wisdom is not merely the accumulation of knowledge. True wisdom begins with a hearing heart, develops through humility and a willingness to learn, and produces the understanding necessary to fulfill God's purpose. A renewed mind and a healed heart allow believers to live with greater awareness of God's presence, power, and direction.

I. Opening Prayer: The Need for Wisdom and Revelation

A. Prayer for spiritual understanding

Pastor Brooks begins by asking God to open the eyes of the heart and grant believers the spirit of wisdom and revelation.

The prayer emphasizes several spiritual realities:

- Knowing the hope of God's calling.

- Understanding the riches of His inheritance in the saints.

- Recognizing the exceeding greatness of His power toward believers.

- Understanding the power demonstrated in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- Being filled with the knowledge of God's will in wisdom and spiritual understanding.

B. The purpose of spiritual understanding

The objective is not simply to acquire information but to become aware of what God has made available through Christ.

The believer must develop an understanding that changes how life is perceived and approached.

II. Wisdom Begins With Hearing

A. The foundational principle

Pastor Brooks introduces the central idea:

"Wisdom is hearing."

He explains that wise people do not become wise simply because they possess large amounts of knowledge. They become wise because they listen and continue learning.

B. The danger of assuming we know enough

- Knowledge can produce pride.

- Pride can create resistance to additional information.

- No individual knows everything.

- Even highly experienced people have more to learn.

- Wisdom requires maintaining an attitude of openness.

C. The need for wisdom in a rapidly changing world

The world is experiencing significant change, including developments in artificial intelligence and technology.

Pastor Brooks encourages believers to:

- Avoid responding to change with fear.

- Recognize their God-given calling and assignment.

- Discover where their gifts and abilities are needed.

- Obtain wisdom relevant to their assignments.

- Develop the ability to adapt to new circumstances.

D. Establishing a stable foundation

With increasing amounts of information and misinformation, believers must become grounded in the Word of God.

Pastor Brooks emphasizes the importance of receiving revelation from Scripture and building life upon a foundation that cannot be easily shaken.

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III. Understanding the Relationship Between Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding

Scripture: Proverbs 4:7–8

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding."

A. Knowledge answers the question: What?

Knowledge provides information about a subject.

It enables a person to identify facts, concepts, procedures, and available resources.

B. Wisdom answers the question: How?

Pastor Brooks uses the expression "wise dominion" to illustrate the practical application of wisdom.

He describes wisdom as insight and skill that enable a person to make something work as intended.

Wisdom produces:

- Practical competence.

- The ability to apply knowledge.

- Effective judgment.

- The capacity to solve problems.

- The ability to function successfully within a particular discipline.

Every area of life has its own specialized knowledge, language, and practices. Moving into a new field requires learning how that field works.

C. Understanding answers the question: Why?

Understanding provides insight into the reasons behind a process.

A person may know how to do something without understanding why it works.

Understanding opens the door to:

- Deeper comprehension.

- Creative problem-solving.

- Innovation.

- Improved methods.

- The development of new approaches.

D. The relationship among the three

WHAT

Knowledge

Information and facts.

HOW

Wisdom

Skillful application of knowledge.

WHY

Understanding

Insight into underlying principles and reasons.

E. The necessity of pursuing wisdom

Wisdom must be intentionally sought and embraced.

Pastor Brooks teaches that although God's gifts are available through Christ, obtaining and applying wisdom requires commitment, discipline, and personal investment.

The pursuit itself demonstrates that we value what we seek.

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IV. The Importance of Mentors and Instruction

A. Wisdom is often received through people

God uses human relationships to communicate wisdom.

Mentors, parents, pastors, and experienced individuals can provide insight that is not immediately available through independent study.

B. The importance of internalizing instruction

Pastor Brooks explains that the voice of someone we can see can train us to hear that person's wisdom when they are no longer present.

The goal of instruction is not merely to receive direction while a mentor is present.

It is to develop the ability to remember and apply that instruction independently.

C. The example of parents and children

A child's freedom away from parental supervision is related to the child's ability to practice the values and instructions received at home.

Before making a decision, a young person may ask:

What would my father say if he were here?

Internalized instruction helps guide conduct when direct supervision is absent.

D. Maturity includes accepting that we will not always get our way

Pastor Brooks uses his experience with teenagers to explain that adulthood requires responsibility.

Young people must learn:

- Freedom includes responsibility.

- Personal choices produce consequences.

- Independence requires discipline.

- Desires must be balanced with obligations.

Maturity includes remaining content when things do not go as desired.

He applies the principle to the Christian life.

Even after decades of walking with God, he acknowledges that God has not always given him his own way.

Spiritual maturity includes accepting God's direction rather than insisting upon personal preferences.

V. Our Calling Is Connected to Solving Problems

A. God gives people assignments

Pastor Brooks teaches that our assignments and the rewards associated with them are connected to the problems we are called to solve.

Different occupations address different kinds of problems.

He uses the example of an attorney whose specialized training helps people navigate legal matters.

B. Preparation increases our problem-solving capacity

Education, reading, study, and experience position individuals to solve increasingly complex problems.

Learning should develop practical competence rather than merely increasing the ability to discuss ideas.

C. Helping people requires more than providing immediate assistance

Pastor Brooks distinguishes between meeting an immediate need and helping someone become capable of meeting needs independently.

Long-term empowerment frequently requires addressing underlying thinking and developing new capabilities.

D. Conventional thinking may prevent progress

Sometimes the greatest barrier to helping people is the way they currently understand their circumstances.

To advance a person, organization, or ministry, it may be necessary to challenge conventional thinking and introduce a different way of approaching problems.

E. Creativity allows us to see possibilities that do not yet exist

The ability to envision something different is an important part of solving problems.

Pastor Brooks uses the development of the automobile to illustrate how innovation provides solutions that may not be obvious to people accustomed to existing methods.

New ideas may initially lack the supporting systems necessary for widespread adoption.

Nevertheless, that does not mean the idea should be abandoned.

Innovation often requires persistence while the necessary infrastructure develops.

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VI. Creativity and Adaptability Are Essential to Christian Living

A. Do not fear technological change

Pastor Brooks discusses artificial intelligence as an example of how rapidly the world is changing.

People often imagine new technology entering an otherwise unchanged world.

However, technological developments can also create new possibilities, responsibilities, and forms of work.

His encouragement is to remain flexible and prepared to learn.

B. Creativity is not limited to the arts

Creativity is commonly associated with:

Music, Painting, Dance, Other artistic expressions

Pastor Brooks argues that creativity must also be understood as the ability to find solutions to problems.

C. Believers must be creative problem-solvers

Not every challenge comes with an established solution.

Some situations require an individual to develop a new approach.

D. The example of parenting and education

Children are different from one another.

They may require different methods of instruction, encouragement, and correction.

Likewise, students do not all learn in precisely the same way.

Effective teachers must learn about their students before determining how best to teach them.

E. Creativity requires listening

The ability to develop an effective solution begins with understanding the actual problem.

Listening makes it possible to recognize differences, identify needs, and discover possibilities that might otherwise be overlooked.

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VII. New Levels Require New Thinking

A. A vision of the future creates a reason to change

Pastor Brooks teaches that when people lose their vision of the future, they often return to the familiarity of their past.

People need to see a different picture of what is possible.

Vision motivates them to leave established patterns and move toward something new.

B. Old thinking cannot always solve new problems

The thinking that produced a particular problem may be insufficient to resolve it.

Moving to a new level requires:

- New thinking.

- Higher faith.

- New relationships.

- A willingness to abandon outdated assumptions.

C. Problems can become opportunities for development

Difficulties may force individuals to expand their understanding and develop capabilities they did not previously possess.

Rather than viewing every problem only as an obstacle, believers can recognize opportunities for growth.

D. Remain open to learning from younger generations

Pastor Brooks describes his intention to assemble a roundtable of emerging leaders.

He expresses an interest not only in teaching them but also in learning from them.

This illustrates an important leadership principle:

Experience does not eliminate the need to remain teachable.

A leader who has served for decades still needs insight into emerging circumstances.

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VIII. Distinguish Between Principles and Methods

A. Principles remain constant

Pastor Brooks describes principles as foundational truths that continue to operate regardless of changing circumstances.

For the church, a foundational principle is the proclamation of the life-changing Word of God.

The values of the church must remain rooted in Scripture.

B. Methods are dependent upon circumstances

Methods are the particular ways principles are expressed or applied.

Examples include:

- Clothing and presentation styles.

- The time and location of ministry activities.

- Communication platforms.

- Teaching formats.

- Organizational practices.

These methods can change without abandoning the principle they serve.

C. The next generation must receive principles rather than merely reproduce methods

Experienced leaders should communicate the foundational truths that have guided their lives.

Younger leaders must understand those principles well enough to develop appropriate methods for their own circumstances.

D. Leaders must also be willing to change

Leadership is not a one-directional transfer of information.

The experienced leader has a responsibility to hear emerging perspectives and reconsider methods that may no longer be effective.

E. Methods must remain within proper boundaries

Pastor Brooks identifies two considerations:

Methods must remain consistent with underlying principles.

Methods must be appropriate to the culture and relationships in which they are used.

He illustrates this with an example of a speaker who can use familiar or confrontational language in a congregation where trust has been established.

Someone else using identical language without that relationship may produce an entirely different response.

F. Being correct does not eliminate the need for strategy

An approach can be factually correct but poorly suited to a particular audience or situation.

Wisdom requires knowing not only what to communicate but also how and when to communicate it.

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IX. Understanding the Times: A Responsibility of Leadership

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 12:32

The sons of Issachar had understanding of the times and knew what Israel ought to do.

A. Understanding requires awareness of present circumstances

Leaders must recognize the environment in which they serve.

Knowledge of past successes is not sufficient for addressing present challenges.

B. The danger of organizational obsolescence

Pastor Brooks explains that an organization is threatened when changes in the external world occur faster than the organization adapts internally.

He applies this directly to the church.

Tradition alone cannot determine the effectiveness of present methods.

C. The church must communicate in a changing environment

He identifies major changes in media and technology.

The availability of digital devices and online platforms has fundamentally changed how people access information.

The church must recognize these changes when determining how to reach people.

D. Maintaining biblical principles while adapting methods

The church's mission remains connected to the Word of God.

However, its methods must take present conditions into account.

Pastor Brooks describes the importance of making the church's message available through multiple digital platforms.

E. Understanding the times produces appropriate action

The example of Issachar combines two essential responsibilities:

Understanding what is happening.

Knowing what should be done in response.

Awareness alone is insufficient without wise action.

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X. A Wise Person Continues to Learn and Seek Counsel

Scripture: Proverbs 1:1–7

A. The purposes of Proverbs

Pastor Brooks highlights several objectives of biblical wisdom:

Knowing wisdom and instruction.
Perceiving words of understanding.
Receiving instruction in wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity.
Developing prudence.
Growing in knowledge and discretion.
Increasing learning.
Obtaining wise counsel.

B. The importance of seeking experienced people

When entering a profession, ministry, or specialized field, seek people already working in that area.
Examples include consulting doctors when pursuing medicine or engineers when pursuing engineering.
Experienced people possess practical insight that may not be obvious to an outside observer.

C. Develop relationships with mentors

Pastor Brooks references Bishop Darlington, his pastor, as an example.
He describes discovering which subjects inspire his mentor to share deeper knowledge.
These conversations become opportunities for learning.

D. Wisdom is a posture of the heart

Wisdom requires an attitude of listening.
A person may be highly intelligent yet resistant to receiving instruction.
Intelligence alone does not guarantee teachability.

E. Hunger is necessary for growth

Pastor Brooks emphasizes that people must value what others are offering.
When individuals demonstrate little interest in receiving wisdom, meaningful instruction becomes difficult.

F. Demonstrate that you value instruction

He recounts an experience with someone who told him to get a pencil and paper before continuing a conversation.
Rather than taking offense, he followed the instruction because the information was valuable.
Humility creates opportunities to receive knowledge that pride may cause us to miss.

G. Wise counsel can prevent expensive mistakes

When preparing to renovate a church facility, Pastor Brooks sought advice from people within a 150-mile radius who had completed similar projects.

Their experiences helped him avoid unnecessary mistakes and expenses.

The principle is that we do not need to personally repeat every costly lesson someone else has already learned.

Seeking counsel can save time, money, and unnecessary hardship.

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XI. Solomon's Prayer: Give Me a Hearing Heart

Scripture: 1 Kings 3:5–12

A. God appears to Solomon

God appears to Solomon in a dream and invites him to ask for what he desires.

B. Solomon acknowledges his limitations

Solomon recognizes that he has been given responsibility for leading God's people but lacks the experience necessary to fulfill that assignment.

Instead of pretending to know everything, he acknowledges his need.

C. Solomon requests an understanding heart

Pastor Brooks emphasizes the connection between an understanding heart and a hearing heart.

Solomon does not merely ask for information.

He asks for the internal capacity to listen, understand, and make wise decisions.

D. Humility opens the door to greater wisdom

Pastor Brooks encourages believers to remain learners.

Even after gaining significant experience, they must resist the idea that they have mastered everything.

E. Remain hungry for knowledge throughout life

He references his elderly bishop, who continues to demonstrate a strong desire to learn.

Pastor Brooks also describes discovering new insights while studying the name of Jesus after decades of ministry.

The lesson is that spiritual experience must never become an excuse for intellectual or spiritual stagnation.

F. God can provide the heart we need

Solomon's request pleased God.

Pastor Brooks emphasizes that God is able to give believers an understanding heart.

We should therefore make the condition of our hearts an intentional matter of prayer.

The objective is not simply to ask God for wisdom to solve a single problem but to ask Him to develop the kind of heart that continually receives wisdom.

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XII. The Condition of the Heart Determines How We Receive and Apply Wisdom

A. God's kingdom works through the heart

Pastor Brooks explains that individuals are responsible for the condition of their hearts, but genuine heart transformation requires God's work.

Therefore, the heart should become a primary focus of prayer.

B. Ask God for the kind of heart you need

He identifies several important prayers:

Lord, give me an understanding heart.

Give me a loving heart.

Give me a sensitive heart.

Give me a believing heart.

Give me a healed heart.

C. A wounded heart can interfere with spiritual growth

Pastor Brooks describes a personal experience of asking God why certain things were not working in his life.

He recounts recognizing the need for healing rather than simply accumulating additional Scriptures about faith.

His point is that spiritual information alone does not replace the need for personal transformation.

D. Spend time in God's presence

Healing requires allowing God to address issues that may have been neglected.

Believers must be willing to recognize and acknowledge what is happening within their hearts.

E. Recognize destructive attitudes

Pastor Brooks identifies envy and comparison as examples.

He describes the subtle temptation to feel satisfaction when something unfortunate happens to a person we dislike.

Such reactions reveal attitudes that need to be brought before God.

F. Pray for purity and transformation

The appropriate response is not merely to suppress an undesirable feeling.

It is to acknowledge it before God and ask Him to remove what is displeasing to Him.

Scripture connection: Psalm 19:14

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord."

The believer's concern must extend beyond outward conduct to the inner thoughts and motivations of the heart.

XIII. A Renewed Mind Maintains an Awareness of God's Presence and Power

A. The goal of renewed thinking

Pastor Brooks returns to the importance of an understanding heart and a renewed mind.

Renewal changes the believer's default way of approaching life.

B. An unrenewed response to problems

When difficulties arise, a person may initially think:

What am I going to do?

Only afterward does that person remember God's presence and attempt to incorporate faith into the situation.

C. A renewed mind begins with God

Pastor Brooks describes a renewed mind as having an automatic awareness of:

- God's presence.

- God's power.

- Our identity as God's children.

- The resources available through Christ.

- Our position as representatives of Jesus.

Rather than treating God as an afterthought, the believer begins with the awareness that God is present.

D. Understanding our identity in Christ

Pastor Brooks uses the analogy of power of attorney to explain the believer's authority to act in Jesus' name.

His emphasis is that the name of Jesus is not a magical expression added to the end of a prayer.

The use of His name must flow from understanding our relationship with Him and our identity as His representatives.

E. The desired outcome

Pastor Brooks wants believers to develop:

- A genuine heart for God.

- A genuine hunger for wisdom.

- An understanding of their identity in Christ.

- Awareness of God's presence and power.

- An understanding of where God is leading them.

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XIV. Closing Prayer: A Clean, Pure, and Listening Heart

Pastor Brooks concludes by leading the congregation in a prayer for wholeness and restoration.

A. Acknowledge God as shepherd and restorer

God restores the soul and makes His people whole.

B. Ask God to heal the heart

The prayer identifies sources of emotional and spiritual injury:

- Betrayal, Hurt, Trauma, Disappointment, Unfulfilled expectations.

C. Ask God to remove destructive attitudes

The prayer addresses:

- Envy, Unforgiveness, Bitterness, Resentment, Entitlement.

D. Ask God to create the right heart

The final requests are for:

A clean heart, A pure heart, A listening heart.

The sermon concludes by connecting the pursuit of wisdom with the necessity of inner transformation.

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Summary of the Sermon's Major Principles

The progression of wisdom

Develop a hearing heart.

Humility and listening establish the foundation for receiving wisdom.

Pursue knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

Learn what things are, how they work, and why they work.

Receive instruction from others.

Mentors and wise counselors provide insight that can prevent unnecessary mistakes.

Think creatively and solve problems.

Our assignments require us to develop solutions that help others.

Adapt methods without abandoning principles.

Understanding changing circumstances enables effective ministry and leadership.

Remain a lifelong learner.

Experience and age should never eliminate our hunger for wisdom.

Allow God to heal and transform the heart.

Spiritual growth involves more than gathering information. It requires inner transformation.

Live with a renewed mind.

Approach life with an established awareness of God's presence, power, and our identity in Christ.

Final Summary Statement

Pastor Joel Brooks teaches that the foundation of wisdom is a humble, hearing heart. Knowledge provides information, wisdom enables its application, and understanding reveals the principles necessary for innovation and effective problem-solving. As believers remain teachable, seek wise counsel, adapt to changing circumstances, and allow God to heal their hearts, they develop renewed minds that are continually aware of His presence and power. The ultimate goal is not simply to know more but to become people whose hearts are prepared to hear God, receive His wisdom, and fulfill His purposes.