# **Russell Kelfer**

# Wiser Than All Men

# 962-B

Series: God's Living Legends II



Three years ago Betty's parents gave her a brand new car. It was everything she had always wanted; and every morning since then, she has gone out into the garage, taken out a cloth, and polished it. Every weekend she vacuums it out and cleans the interior. You say, well, what's so unusual about that? Well, what's so unusual is she's never driven it. It's never been started. She wanted the car, but *she's afraid to use it.* You are probably thinking, as I am, "What a waste!"

Ben Reynolds had a similar experience. He had always wanted a computer. Finally, he saved up enough of his hard earned dollars to make the big investment. He went down to Computerville, the local computer department store, listened to all the sales stories, researched every brand, investigated all the software, and then made his purchase. You say, what's so unusual about that? Well, that was four months ago, and the computer is still in the box. (Apparently it isn't user friendly enough.) So, when anyone asks Ben if he owns a computer, he always answers, "You bet, I bought a brand new Orange or Apple or Pear or something." He owns one, but he has never used it. You must be thinking what I am thinking, "What a waste!"

Marie spent nine years of her life going to medical school training to be a doctor. Finally she graduated, and with honors. Hospitals and clinics from all over the country called her with job offers. But guess what Marie did? She threw her diploma in the wastebasket, and went back to her old job as a cashier. Her reason: "I'd rather give someone the wrong change than operate on the wrong patient." You might respect her integrity, but you probably can't help but think, "What a waste!"

Johnny had a similar experience. He went to school for five years to become an engineer. He graduated in the upper 2% of his class and was offered a job with the number one electronic firm in the nation. He declined, saying he was bored with slide rules and numbers. He thought he'd get a job digging ditches instead. You can't help but admire his individuality, but I'll bet you're thinking what I'm thinking, "What a waste!"

What a waste for someone to be skilled and equipped and trained for a certain task, or to be given all of the necessary tools

to be someone or go somewhere or do something, only to decide that he or she would rather not use that talent or that training or that gift at all.

But that's nothing compared to the ocean of Christians around the world, who have been equipped by God for a certain task, given everything they will ever need to perform that task, only to determine not to use that gift or that skill or that discernment or that training or that experience for God's glory.

The church can, in fact, be likened to a mighty arsenal of weapons that are stored up in a warehouse that if rightfully used, would cause the enemy to flee for his life. But the arsenal is, for the most part, sitting idle, rusting, corroding, decaying, because it is not being used. What a waste!

To have in your hand the key to the vault of eternity and not be willing to use it to open the door of Heaven for others. What a waste!

To have in your heart the knowledge of the Holy One that, properly communicated, can alter the direction of another's life and not share it. What a waste!

And to have in your possession a degree of divine wisdom that, rightly used, will draw life into God's perspective for those around you who are haunted and hurting and to refuse to use it. What a waste, indeed!

In other words, the question we are going to ask ourselves this morning is, "Are we really using the wisdom God has given us?"

Let me ask it another way. "If you knew you had the wisdom of Solomon but refused to use it, would you be satisfied with your life?" Before you answer that, be careful because it just may be possible that you do.

Speaking of Solomon, he is the subject of our study, as we continue our journey through the land of God's Living Legends. He is our man of the hour, a man who has but recently been elevated to the throne; and though he has violated early in his reign the principle of unequal yoking by marrying Pharaoh's daughter, still without question, he is in love with his God. In last lesson, we saw God test that love, and we saw Solomon pass that test with flying colors. In essence, we saw:

#### I - SOLOMON'S CHOICE

We saw God give Solomon a fill-in-the-blank quiz, in which he was guaranteed to win a prize. The question was, "If you could only ask for ONE THING in life, what would it be? The prize was, whatever you asked for, you got. Solomon could have asked for riches. He didn't. Solomon could have asked for long life. He didn't. Solomon could have asked for revenge. He didn't. Solomon could have asked for honor. He didn't. Solomon could have asked for a lot of things that would have made him happier and would have insured him the acclaim the world calls "success". Instead, Solomon asked God to give him His heart. He asked God for the capacity to think His thoughts.

And just as He promised, God gave Solomon just what he asked for; and in keeping with His marvelous grace, God gave Solomon riches and honor as well.

Now, one day later, Solomon is the wisest man who has ever lived. The question is, "What will Solomon do with this unexpected, undeserved, unparalleled gift of wisdom?" The answer to that question is waiting for us in the very next verse.

When God gives someone something, He often does not wait long to see how he will use it. This incident is certainly no exception. For immediately after Solomon's choice, the Scripture clearly records it.

### II - SOLOMON'S CRISIS

Turn in your Bible to I Kings, chapter three, and we will begin reading where we left off in our last study,

Then Solomon awoke; and indeed it had been a dream. And he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, offered up burnt offerings, offered peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.

Now two women who were harlots came to the king, and stood before him.

And one woman said, "O my lord, this woman and I dwell in the same house; and I gave birth while she was in the house

Then it happened, the third day after that I had given birth, that this woman also gave birth. And we were together; no one was with us in the house, except the two of us in the house.

And this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him.

So she arose in the middle of the night and took my son from my side, while your maidservant slept, and laid him in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom.

And when I rose in the morning to nurse my son, there he was, dead. But when I examined him in the morning, indeed, he was not my son whom I had borne."

Then the other woman said, "No! But the living one is my son, and the dead one is your son." And the first woman said, "No! But the dead one is your son, and the living one is my son." Thus they spoke before the king.

(I Kings 3:15-22 NKJV)

Now I know what you're thinking. You are probably thinking: Who let them in? This is King Solomon, here, the wisest man in all the earth, the king of Israel, the son of David. He has just been informed by God that the Mind of God has literally been transfused into his mind. He must be visualizing becoming the Henry Kissinger of Soloman's time, as the heads of state bring their insoluble international differences to his feet to be solved. Surely he is imagining the captains of the king's host coming to him to map out their plans for the future. Surely, he is anticipating the dignitaries from the religious realm, the priests and the prophets bowing before him in utter awe as they seek God's Will for the future. And surely, while he is visualizing and imagining and anticipating these things, the doors open, and in come two harlots.

Notice first the *immediacy* of the crisis. We do not know for sure how much time passed, but we do know this was the very next recorded incident in Solomon's life. He had asked for wisdom. God had given him wisdom, and now immediately God was placing him in a place where he *needed* wisdom. In other words, God was testing Solomon's stewardship of that which he had asked for and received. God was saying, "I didn't give you wisdom to store up; I gave it to you to give away."

This is one of the most identifiable problems in evangelical Christianity today, the problem of the Christians seeking for wisdom as an end within itself. But God isn't making us wise so we can put on display in the lighted trophy case of the local church. We are becoming wise so that we can become salt and light. So that we can immediately take the higher perspective of

the Spirit and apply it to the workaday world in which we live.

There are, as always, two extremes, which Satan loves to create. At one end is the *activity syndrome* where Christians upon conversion *immediately* become religious workaholics, until on a brownie point basis of accomplishments; the unlearned and unchanged climb the ladder of responsibility in the Christian community. This philosophy spawns a generation of novices in positions of leadership in direct contradiction to Scripture.

The opposite extreme is the let's learn or let's become mentality that says we are what we learn, or by becoming, we have achieved; until learning and becoming becomes an end within itself. You don't do anything; you just sit and become spiritual by attending the right church or listening to the right teacher or being a part of the right Bible Study Group. One mentality produces a generation of over-active spiritual weaklings; the other, a generation of over-fed, under-exercised, spiritual blimps. Neither fits the New Testament concept of the church. The church receives the Word with all readiness of mind as the Bereans did. Then it goes out and becomes salt and light as the disciples did. Anything short of that balance leads to a degree of spiritual ineffectiveness. Solomon asked God to make him a spiritual giant. God didn't send him to a certain school or make him the pastor of a certain flock, or make him captive to a certain set of exclusive doctrine. God just made him wise. Then, immediately, God sent him a ministry to test his wisdom.

Notice not only the immediacy of Solomon's crisis, notice the *reality* of Solomon's crisis. In walked two harlots, the moral scum of society. Not kings or princes or mighty men of valor—two harlots. God had placed Solomon in the very real world where the battle was fought, where real people, immoral people, hurting people, imperfect people, were caught up in real-life dramas. That's where Christianity must be applied in order for the world to see it work. Jesus went where publicans and sinners were, because *they were the ones who knew they had a need*. But today, many of us have turned the church into a refuge, a sanctuary, where those who believe can form a pseudo-spiritual country club and hibernate from the world of sighing, crying and dying people who will never set foot in our holy huddles.

Solomon had a real problem on his hands. Two women of the street, moral degenerates, were living in this one house alone

together. Both of them had illegitimate children at about the same time. One night they were sleeping, and one of the mothers accidentally rolled over and smothered her child. The other mother was still sleeping. The next morning, according to Mother "A", she awakens to nurse her child, but it is dead. At first she grieves, but on closer examination, she exclaims, "This is not my child!" So she comes to Solomon and accuses the other harlot of swapping the children in the middle of the night, taking her living child and trading it for the one who had died. My friend, that is a real crisis. And I don't have to tell some of you that if you plan to ask God to use you in the Kingdom to meet the needs of those who are hurting, you can turn off the soap operas on television. You won't need them anymore. Into your living room will come reallife situations so bizarre, so entangled, so seemingly unlikely, you will soon come to feel you could write a real-life drama yourself that no one would really believe.

Now notice the agony of the crisis. Not only was it immediate and real, it was agonizing. This responsibility that now rested on Solomon's shoulders was incredible. Even though these were women of the street, they were real people with real needs. And the decision Solomon made would determine whether or not a little child would ever know its real mother. Counseling, Beloved, is agonizing if you care at all. It will fill you with guilt and fear and give you the weight of the world to carry, if you try to do it in your own strength. I hurt for those who are not believers, who in their own energy, or filled with their own wisdom, no matter how educated they may be, are trying to determine the fate of other people, based only on human understanding. What a load to carry. Solomon didn't have to carry that load. And neither do vou. God had given him a supernatural, easily-spendable commodity in unlimited quantities called "wisdom". All Solomon had to do was, in that instant, when human understanding was inadequate, release his mind into the hands of Jehovah, and allow that divine wisdom God had given him to flow through his life, and touch others. Solomon did that. Begin reading in verse 23,

And the king said, "The one says, This is my son who lives, and your son is the dead one" and the other says, 'No! But your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one."

Then the king said, "Bring me a sword." And they brought a sword before the king.

And the king said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other."

Then the woman whose son living spoke was to the king, for she yearned with compassion for her son; and she said, "O my lord, give her the living child, and in by no means kill him!" But the other said, "Let him be neither mine nor yours, but divide him."

So the king answered and said, "Give the first woman the living child, and by no means kill him; she is his mother."

(I Kings 3:23-27 NKJV)

The first thing Solomon did was what any good counselor would do; he repeated the problem before both parties to be sure that there was no misunderstanding the accusation. There was none. The second thing Solomon did was to create a situation that would go beyond the immediate issue to the heart of the problem. The real issue was one of character, not circumstances. It always is. One of these women was lying. So Solomon came up with an instant solution to the problem that would not solve the crisis (both would be childless), but it would reveal the truth. He offered to cut the child in half and give each mother half a baby. That way neither would have a child, and the woman who only wanted revenge would have it; but the mother who really had a living child, would lose it. God knew a real mother would rather give her child to another than see it slain. He had built in that element of love into a mother's heart. So God, not Solomon, but God speaking through Solomon, gave the women this unique proposal. As is always the case when God is invoking His wisdom, it works. The lying mother says, "Kill the child"; the real mother says, "No. give it to her." Solomon gives the real mother her baby, and the issue is solved. You see real-life problems do have solutions when you apply the wisdom of God in place of human understanding. So Solomon's choice had been to ask of God one thing, and he had asked for wisdom. Solomon's crisis was that, immediately, God sent him a very real, very agonizing problem to solve, that the mind of man would have no solution for. As always, wisdom prevailed. Now look at Solomon's choice.

## III - SOLOMON'S CHOICE

Solomon had invoked that divine commodity called wisdom by allowing God's mind to work through his. The result was that his life no longer was his, it became public property. He had something the world needed, and the world would never again let

#### him keep it to himself.

And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had rendered; and they feared the king for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice.

(I Kings 3:28 NKJV)

And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness [generosity] of heart like the sand on the seashore.

Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt.

For he was wiser than all men—than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all surrounding nations.

And he spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five.

Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish.

And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

(I Kings 4:29-34 NKJV)

## WISER THAN ALL MEN

Wiser than all men was he In his or any day. From all the east they came to hear Just what he had to say.

Wiser than all men was he, Solomon was his name. He asked his God for wisdom and, Lo, two harlots came.

They brought to him a problem He solved it instantly, And soon the world was shouting Wiser than all is he!

Now Solomon's famous wisdom Had brought him power and fame, And neither his life nor his ministry Would ever be the same.

Wiser than all men! What a commendation to receive from the world. Now God's man, equipped with God's mind, was displaying such discernment that even those from the nations roundabout were flocking to his side to hear what he had to say.

Look at the miracle of Solomon's wisdom unfold:

1- Look at chapter 3, verse 28, it gives us our fist clue.

...and they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice. (I Kings 3:28b NKJV)

The first miracle of Solomon's wisdom was that it was evident that it came from God. They feared the king for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him and he could claim no credit for his discernment. Even the unbelievers who gathered around him were astonished that God's wisdom was so evident in him.

2- Look at chapter 4, verse 29, it gives the second great picture of Solomon's wisdom.

And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore.

(I Kings 4:29 NKJV)

In other words, *the wisdom he possessed was immeasurable*. He was not simply endowed with a higher degree of wisdom than others. It was so much higher it was immeasurable.

- 3- In the same verse (and here is the key), we read that this immeasurable discernment of spirit was accomplished by immeasurable generosity. In other words, Solomon did not attempt to use this wisdom for his own benefit to further his own ministry, to expand his own reputation, to broaden the scope of his own power. He saw this God-like discernment as a commodity that was likened to manna—save it, and it will spoil; give it away and it will multiply beyond comprehension.
- 4- So incredible was Solomon's discernment that *he was* proclaimed by all to be wiser than all men! He was wiser than the great minds of the east; wiser than the great minds of the past; wiser than any who had ever lived.
- 5- Solomon expressed his wisdom in terms men could understand. Like the living Son of David who was to come, the personification of Wisdom who was yet to give His life a ransom for many, Solomon spoke in the simplicity of parables and illustrations. He spoke of the cedars of Lebanon; he drew word pictures that drew life out of the animal kingdom and all of

nature. He took what men understood and used that as a vehicle to teach them truths about things they did not understand. That is wisdom. Wisdom is not found on the lips of those whose goal it is to simply impart an abundance of facts to astound the world with their knowledge. Wisdom is expressed when those who listen understand what they are hearing and when that understanding produces change.

6- The wisdom of God as it flowed through Solomon created a ministry. He did not have to go out and organize the Church of the Wise Man, or advertise his latest book on Israeli television, or give a free handkerchief to all who sent in a donation. Solomon's ministry developed because out of his life there flowed rivers of Living Water. He could not help but have a ministry. The wisdom of God produces a ministry in and of itself. This brings us to Solomon's challenge.

#### IV - SOLOMON'S CHALLENGE

Solomon's challenge to us ought to be obvious by now. Solomon, the Living Legend, was demonstrating to us what it was like to live life when the literal, living wisdom of God is actually flowing through you. When God's wisdom is flowing through you, others know that it comes from God. When God's wisdom is flowing through you, it is immeasurable when compared to the world's wisdom. When God's wisdom is flowing through you, there is created a literal pipeline through which that wisdom flows into the lives of others. When God's wisdom is flowing through you, you will have discernment no one who is not a believer can have! When God's wisdom is flowing through you, it will be communicated in terms others can understand; and when God's wisdom is flowing through you, it literally creates it own ministry. Like an oasis of lush greenery in a parched and endless desert, that wisdom will draw men and women to feast on its rivers and feed on its truth from distances beyond your imagination.

That's what the wisdom of Solomon will do. It will flow like a river, multiply like the sands on the seashore, and bless others like an unexpected shower on a dry summer's day. You, no doubt, must be thinking what I am thinking. Oh, to have the wisdom of Solomon! Oh, to be wiser than all men!

I must confess to you, I know someone who is living today, in this very city, who has *that kind* of wisdom. Would you like to meet them? You would? Then when you get home today and

walk in your house, go directly without stopping, and look in the first mirror you come to. Look straight ahead, without wavering, and say to yourself; "Wiser than all men is he!" Or, "Wiser than all women is she!" You say, "Whoa, Kelfer, you haven't seen what stares at me when I look in the mirror." Yes I have! I look at the same kind of mess you look at. But you know what? God has chosen the foolish things of this world to confound those the world considers wise. You and I, then, are perfect candidates for the wisdom of Solomon.

Jesus said of Himself in Matthew, "indeed a greater than Solomon is here" (Matthew 12:42c). And then in those immortal words of John, chapter sixteen, He turned to us and promised us that He who was greater than Solomon would now be available to literally inhabit our minds, giving to us an even greater level of wisdom than Solomon had. He said this:

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I go not away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you."

(John 16:7 NKJV)

"However, when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority; but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you."

(John 16:13-15 NKJV)

Wiser than all men you are! Because the wisdom of the ages LIVES in you! Therefore, you have at your disposal godly discernment beyond your comprehension. Greater than Solomon is in you. Therefore, if allowed to flow unhindered through you, He who is greater than Solomon will enable you to demonstrate a kind of wisdom that will glorify God, be beyond measure, demonstrate itself by giving itself away, confound even the unbelievers who listen, declare itself in terms so simple a child can understand; and it will, in spite of you, create through you a ministry.

Wiser than all men are you! At your disposal is a godly form of discernment that will allow you, regardless of your education, your IQ, your training, or your upbringing, to take like's great questions, and by applying the principles found in Scripture,

and applying them by faith (for they are in direct opposition to the world's kind of wisdom), you can astonish yourself and those around you as well. And the less qualified you feel you are, by the world's standards, the more likely you are to become wise. That's the mystery of the Wisdom of God. You say, well what do I have to do to become wise? It isn't complicated at all.

- 1- You have to want it more than anything else, just as Solomon did. You have to seek first the kingdom before riches, before honor, before revenge (Matthew 6:33).
  - 2- You have to ask for it. James says it all:

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given him.

(James 1:5 NKJV)

(James 1.5 NKOV)

God won't scold you for asking; He delights to give it to you.

3- When Satan confronts you and causes you to question how the mind of God could operate in the likes of you, <u>you must resist Satan and draw nigh unto God</u>, or else you will become doubleminded. In other words, by faith you must take God at His Word and believe that it will happen. James goes on to say:

But 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.

For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;

He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

(James 1:6-8 NKJV)

4- Having asked, and having continued to believe, <u>you</u> <u>saturate yourself with the Word of God.</u>

Oh, how love I Your law! It is my meditation all the day.

You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; For they are ever with me.

I have more understanding than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation.

I understand more than the ancients, Because I keep Your precepts. (Psalm 119:97-100 NKJV)

5- <u>Keep your sins confessed and your heart teachable</u> in order not to stifle the flow of God's wisdom from His Word. The next verse, Psalm 119,

I have refrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep

Your word.

Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way. (Psalm 119:101,104 NKJV)

6- Look for the fruits of wisdom in your life so that you can give God the glory, and recognize the source. You may be asking, how can I recognize when wisdom is coming from God and not from myself? God has taken care of that, too. James 3:15-17 clearly defines it for us.

This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. [It promotes envy, strife, confusion, and produces evil results.] (James 3:15,16 NKJV)

But ah, godly wisdom, the wisdom that is from above—

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality [consistent] and without hypocrisy.

(James 3:17 NKJV)

When God's kind of discernment is flowing through you, your ministry will be permeated with purity, dominated by a peaceful spirit, clothed with gentleness, not at all self-willed, tenderly considerate, perfectly honest. In other words, the Mind of God will be demonstrated by the Love of God as from your very lips there flow the Words of God. You will have tapped into the power line of eternity, and through your very life there will flow such unrestrained fruitfulness that it will be said of you, he or she is wiser than all men, not from a standpoint of comparing you with others, but rather comparing your wisdom with that of the world's. Compared to the best the world has to offer you will be wiser than all, wiser than any, wiser than the wisest. Because you have done something? God forbid. Because the one whose very name is Wisdom is simply being allowed to live His life in you and through you.

These final comments, in closing: Whenever you ask God for wisdom, expect to be tested, often immediately. Remember Solomon's choice and Solomon's crisis. They often come back-to-back. When the test comes, consciously stop what you are doing and call upon God for wisdom at that moment, claiming James 1:15. Do not become presumptuous with His Wisdom. Asking guarantees that the glory accrues to the One to whom glory is

due. Finally, remember the parable of the talents. Give it freely, and it will multiply; clutch it and lose it.

If it is real, you won't receive the glory. They will say, "See the wisdom of God in him." The evidences of that discernment will multiply so quickly you will be unable to grasp it. Your life will be characterized by unceasing generosity. You will live to give yourself away. Your wisdom will be understandable by the simplest of men because you will supernaturally be enabled to make the complicated simple, rather than do what the world does (make the simple complicated), and, Beloved, you will not be able to help but have a ministry.

You will be a tree planted by rivers of Living Water, and all who are weary will come to sit beneath your shade. All who are hungry will feed from the fruit borne from your branches. All who are weathering storms will hold onto your roots when the winds of life are blowing against their lives. But, you know what? Though they will be resting beneath you, feeding on you, and using you for a refuge they will not even know you are there. They will see you, but because of your wisdom, they will rather see God and glorify Him.

Like Solomon, your ministry will include real people with deep problems, problems that will cause you to agonize, problems that were it up to you, would be beyond your capacity to grasp. But as you release your mind into God's hand and quietly draw on His Wisdom, suddenly, peace will flood your soul; life will spring forth from your branches, and others will be blessed.

Such wisdom is yours for the taking. What a pity to own something of that magnitude and leave in its box, just because you are afraid to open it. What a waste!

Ought we not rather to join together even this moment and quietly, humbly ask God to give us the wisdom of Solomon; yea the wisdom of the One who is greater than Solomon; the One called "Wisdom" who lives within us. Ought we not to set Him free to become in us wiser than all men.

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