

## **PROGRAM 169 - Wise Man or Fool—We Get to Choose**

Most folks judge success by human eyesight. Perfect health. Material riches. Super looks. Great fame. That leaves a problem. All of those things vanish at death. But then eternity begins—and never ends. That's why you need more than human eyesight. You and I need spiritual foresight. God's love letter—the Bible—explains it all. So let's get into it today on More Than Talk. "Wise man or fool—we get to choose."

### **Page 1 - Prayer Is Not a Game—or a "Gimmie"**

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Matthew 7:7

Why doesn't God hand us our heart's desires the first time we ask Him? For the same reason wise parents don't give their children everything they want - and want now! That only creates spoiled brats short on character and long on crankiness. There are times the Lord will give a quick answer - or even a miracle that is immediate at the first prayer breathed to Him. But, more often, there will be something that will put space between your prayer and God's answer. It's called "time" - and God uses it to great effect.

First, time requires patience. When we make an important request of the Lord that has no immediate answer, we will either throw in the towel through unbelief or laziness, or we will persevere in faith until the answer comes. That's why our verse is best read, "Keep on asking..." (Amplified) Second, the time lapse between offered prayer and answered prayer gives time to reflect on our motive in prayer. "Is it selfish?" "Will it bring God glory?" "Will only a 'yes' from God keep me trusting Him - or do I trust Him for who He is, not for what He does?"

Third, I may get any of three possible answers to my prayers: "Yes", "No," or "Wait." That's why I need to know the Word of God in detail and in context, so that my prayer life will line up with the Book. Fourth, the patience to continue in prayer will make me praise God all the more when the answer comes. Apply these words of Jacob Riis to your desperate and longing prayers to the Father: "When nothing seems to help, I go and look at a stone-cutter hammering away at his rock, perhaps a hundred times without as much as a crack showing in it. Yet, at the hundred and first blow it will split in two, and I know it was not that blow that did it, but all that had gone before." Prayer is not a game. It's hard work. So work at it!

My prayer: "Teach me, Lord Jesus, to be as pointed, patient and persistent in prayer as was Elijah when he prayed for rain - and watched and prayed and watched and prayed until it came."

## **MTT PROGRAM 169 PAGE 2**

### **WISE MAN OR FOOL—WE GET TO CHOOSE**

#### **PAGE 2 - Greed Vs. Goodness**

“And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee...for we be brethren.” Genesis 13:8

Father Abraham has left us many lessons of life. One of the most important is building bridges to others rather than walls. Abraham and Lot were so rich that jealousy, greed and rivalry were breaking out among their herdsmen. Rather than insist on first choice, Abraham told Lot to first choose the lands he wanted and Abraham would take the opposite direction.

What an opportunity for Lot to have proven his goodness of heart rather than merely his greed of heart. Lot grabbed what he thought was best for Number One - himself. It turned out to be Sodom and Gomorrah, today somewhere at the bottom of the Dead Sea, the lowest point on earth!

And Abraham? God saw his heart of love that chose to cry for unity even at his own expense. And he gave Abram the promise that all he could see east, west, north and south would be his inheritance - the "Promised Land" of Israel. You, too, will face moments when you can fight for "first place" at the expense of another, or prefer the other above yourself. May you pass the test and be greatly blessed - by the Lord who gives "blessings" that last.

My prayer: "Precious Lord, thank You for lessons from those who walked with You. Give me a heart like Abraham's that does not lust for the material but whose passion burns for You."

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**PAGE 3 Why People Are Like Tea Bags**

“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” Matthew 7:20

There are no eight words more powerful than these in the Bible. The Living Bible puts it this way: "Yes, the way to identify a tree or a person is by the kind of fruit produced." We have had many fruit trees where we have lived - orange, lemon, peach, nectarine, apricot, fig and more. My creed is: "If you can't eat it, don't grow it!" (Only kidding - we love flowers, too.) We expect a certain fruit from each tree, and we are never disappointed.

But what about people. Especially those who call themselves "Christians." Someone said, "People may doubt what you say, but they will believe what you do." That's true, whether in us or in others. I mention the island of Okinawa a lot because that is my spiritual birthplace. An American evangelist went there to hold meetings. There was a problem - a big one. The man was found in sin with one or more of the island's lovelies. Though his words in preaching had been full of persuasion, the fruit of his life was found full of worms and he was sent home.

Never ignore what you plainly see in the lives of others because of what they say to the contrary. You will know them - and they will know you - by the fruits that show - especially what comes out when there is a crisis. It has been said, "People are like tea bags. What is inside comes out when we get in hot water." What did we see in Jesus? The same fruit of the Spirit that He now wants to produce in us - nine beautiful fruits called love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22,23) A life planted in Satan or self will bear the fruit of death - evil words and actions. A life rooted in the Holy Spirit will produce fruits of good words and deeds. You are to discern the difference in others as well as make sure your own life passes the Holy Spirit's fruit-inspection test.

My prayer: "You have given me a simple but effective way to test my own life as well as to discern the lives of others. Father, please teach me well the lesson, 'By their fruits ye shall know them.'"

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**PAGE 4 Eye Sight Vs. Foresight**

"After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." Genesis 15:1

What is it that you want most in life? Most folks would opt for perfect health, material luxury, great fame, super looks, blissful romance, etc. There's a problem. Even if you had all of the above - and they lasted for a lifetime - all would vanish at death. But then eternity begins - and never ends!

Abram offers another great lesson. First he helped care for his nephew Lot who later greedily grabbed the best of the land while Abraham sought to only end the strife between them. Then when Lot was taken captive, instead of Abraham saying, "The cheapskate got what he deserved. Good riddance!" - he rushed off to rescue him. And when Sodom's king offered Abraham material reward, he refused to receive anything but the pleasure of God. That's when God told Abram that he had won something far greater than material stuff that rusts and rots - he had gained the Lord as his shield and "exceeding great reward." I love the KJV of this verse because it's like God saying, "Abraham, you have won me and my favor; and that's what counts." And so it should be for you and me, dear reader - searching the Scriptures daily and ordering our lives accordingly.

My prayer: "Father, help me not to judge success by human eyesight but by spiritual foresight. Work in me until I want only You more than anything this world offers."

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**PAGE 5 Whom Jesus Calls Wise**

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock." Matthew 7:24

Two scenes remain etched in my mind. One I witnessed personally; the other I watched transfixed on television. The first memory is my journey to Gibraltar, between Spain and North Africa. I quickly understood the old saying "solid as the Rock of Gibraltar." It rises from the sea and stands high above the water. Houses built on that rock have withstood many a storm - unlike the second scene that I watched helplessly. It was a house built not on a rock but far too close to the water. The house was literally swept away in the flood and torn to splinters.

Today's verse is a warning from Jesus against modern Christianity's "cheap grace" emphasis that allows for a life of sin as long as a person says "I believe in Christ." The devils also believe, and tremble. We are not to merely give lip service to the Bible. We are to build our spiritual house on the foundation of God's Word. With Jesus, it is the Christian who first hears the Word and then puts it into practice who is called a "wise man."

Just how can this be done? Here's the plan I adopted years ago.

First, I studied all the commands of Jesus - then of the whole New Testament - and finally of the entire Bible. Next I said, "Lord, give me Your power and grace to obey everything You tell me to do." Then I broke down the separate areas of my life so I could more easily grade my progress in the Lord. How Jesus wants me to think. The way I am to choose my words. The treatment of enemies. Loving the brethren. Caring for my wife. Each aspect of life where the Word of God clearly tells me what pleases Him. I encourage you to do the same. The Lord knows the storms that are coming. We yet have time to get ready!

My prayer: "I want to be called 'wise' in Your eyes, precious Lord. I know that can only come from a full knowledge of Your Word and putting that knowledge into daily practice. That's my goal. Help me to pursue it faithfully - starting NOW!"