WENDY BELLO

A WISE WOMAN

Principles for
Living According
to God's Design



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To my daughter Daniela, a gift from God.

My prayer is that you will become a wise woman.

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And above all, to my sweet Lord Jesus, the source of all wisdom, for giving me a full and abundant life. May every word I write always be for Your glory!

PREFACE

In your hands, you hold a book that has a special meaning for me; not because any of my other books are less dear to me, but because this was the first one I published, first in Spanish, and now in English. I remember being left speechless as I held the first copy off the press, and I am so grateful to see this book being translated into English now. What was once a dream has become a reality, to the glory of God.

A Wise Woman began as a series on my blog in the summer of 2013. It had been swirling around in my head for a while but hadn't yet taken shape! That series went on to become one of the most popular on my blog, perhaps for no other reason than a simple yet profound one: As women, you and I naturally desire to be wise—wise wives, mothers, and friends.

While this goal may at times seem unreachable, in reality, it's not. God promises us that wisdom is available to us if we only ask for it: "If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking." (James 1:5 NLT). In His Word, we have a deep well of wise counsel.

Each chapter presents principles of wisdom from the book of Proverbs to help you live as God intended and become the wise woman you long to be. These principles are very practical for everyday life. We will explore the traits that characterize a wise woman: how she manages her home, how she relates to her family and friends, how she dresses, how she uses her resources and time, and more. Of course, we will also include other relevant Bible passages related to the topic, interwoven with experiences each of us may draw upon.

As you and I pay close attention to these principles, we will see that it is indeed possible to achieve the much-desired goal of becoming wise women. That is not to say it will be easy, but it is within our reach. Above all, reaching this goal will involve a transformation of our hearts.

Following each chapter is a section for reflecting on and applying what you have read. This "For Further Reflection" material can be used individually or in a group setting. Each chapter also closes with a prayer that you can make your own or adapt to your personal circumstances. This can be an important help as you grow in your walk with God.

As you read this book, ask God to use the words on these pages to reveal and bring about whatever changes He knows you need in your life.

Thank you for joining me on this journey!

Blessings.

Wendy

FOREWORD

Years ago, I met with the head of the department at the Bible institute where I was studying theology. It was midway through my first year, and I was struggling to adjust, especially to what God was doing in my life. After chatting for a while in her office, she finally came right out and said, "Edu, you're an intelligent woman, but what I want to challenge you to is something more, to become a wise woman."

Those words were seared into my mind and heart, and from that moment until now, becoming a wise woman has been my desire. Day by day. Decision by decision.

In your hands lies an excellent tool for all those women, like me, who are searching for wisdom. Wendy has masterfully unfolded, verse by verse, the elements we need to become wise women.

Living wisely is a long process. It's one of those processes where we'll take one step forward and two steps back, but I don't want you to be discouraged. Instead, treat each mistake, each fall, each setback as an opportunity to move forward with greater strength toward the goal.

Our search for wisdom begins with God and continues through His Word. What better place to learn how to live as wise women than in the book of Proverbs, which begins by saying, "fools despise wisdom" (1:7). In Proverbs, we learn that the fear of the Lord, that is, reverence and obedience to God, is the source of all wisdom (9:10), and without Him, all knowledge is vain and useless. Any wisdom not founded on a true and genuine fear of God will bring no benefit to our lives.

I have always been fascinated by the way Proverbs speaks to us, not only about how to become wise women but also by showing the steps that lead to foolish and senseless behavior! A foolish woman does not desire the knowledge of God but rather rests on her own ideas of wisdom, on her experiences, and on the truths the world tells her. As Proverbs 14:1 says, instead of building up, she tears down.

I want to challenge you, just as I was challenged years ago. Do you want to become merely an intelligent woman, or do you want to become a wise woman as well, one who loves, fears, and reveres God in every aspect of her life? The decision is yours. With the apostle Paul, "I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6).

Ah! Isn't it wonderful to know that God will be with us, helping us every step of the way on our path to wisdom? With this book, you are taking the first step on the long road of transformation that will lead you to wisdom. It is my prayer that, when the Lord finishes refining us, each of us will be considered a wise woman.

Edurne Mencía de Nieve

Author's Note: When this book was first published in Spanish, I was honored that a wonderful woman and ministry partner agreed to write the foreword. Along with her family, she served as a missionary in the Venezuelan Amazon rainforest. When I heard that Edurne had gone to be with the Lord, my heart sank, and tears flowed. I still can't believe it! I know she is now enjoying eternity, and she left us a beautiful legacy. Still, I will miss her. So, I want to thank her for leaving a piece of herself in this book. And thanks also to the Lord for allowing us to serve together. Edu, I'm not saying "goodbye," but "until later." Thank you for living just as you wrote: "Content in His service."



1

A WISE WOMAN

The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:
For learning wisdom and discipline; for understanding insightful sayings.
Proverbs 1:1—2

Years ago, as a young girl who didn't know much about life, I heard my pastor say, "Life is a series of decisions; we are constantly making choices." And he was right.

From the moment we wake up in the morning until we go to bed at night, we make one decision after another. Just think about it! When we get up, we decide what to do first: eat breakfast or get dressed for the day? Then, standing in front of the closet, we decide *what* to wear (an easier decision for men than for us women!). Next, we choose which route to take to work or school, followed by what we'll have for lunch. Will we buy lunch today, or bring our own? And so, perhaps without even realizing it, we spend our days making decisions.

Some of these decisions are easy to make, almost automatically. On the other hand, major life decisions take more time to consider, such as what career to pursue, whom to marry, where we are going to live, and how many children we'll have. At least, that's how it is for most of us.

However, what if I told you that both our small and big decisions require an essential component? That is, to become the women God

envisioned in His original plan, we must strive to be wise women, allowing wisdom to guide our decisions so we can live an abundant life. Let me give some examples:

Eating breakfast at a fast-food place or eating junk food every day is not the same as deciding to eat something healthy.

Leading a sedentary lifestyle is not the same as making an effort to include exercise in our schedule.

Saying the first thing that comes to mind is not the same as carefully weighing our words.

Do you get the picture? Some decisions are simple, like what to have for breakfast, while others are more complex, such as family life details; yet all are important. The results depend on how wisely we make our choices.

So, what exactly is a wise woman? How do we describe that person? This matters because we may have a distorted idea, shaped by what we've learned or the concepts we've formed over the years. To understand better, it will be helpful to distinguish between intelligence and wisdom. My dependable friend, Daniel Webster, defines them this way.

Intelligence:[1]

1. the ability to learn or understand things . . . : reason
2. mental acuteness: cleverness
3. comprehension, knowledge

Wisdom:[2]

1. ability to discern inner qualities and relationships: insight
2. good sense: judgment
3. a wise attitude, belief, or course of action

Let's reread the verse at the beginning of this chapter regarding the purpose of Solomon's proverbs in a different translation (NLT):

"Their purpose is to teach people wisdom and discipline, to help them understand the insights of the wise."

That sounds great, right? However, you may be very intelligent and have a strong ability to understand, but that doesn't necessarily make you wise. Wisdom goes beyond skill; it's the highest form of knowledge, evident in our actions. The world is full of intelligent, brilliant women; sadly, it needs more wise women. That's my purpose for this book. And because you're reading it, you probably want to be part of that second group, just as I do.

THE WISDOM OF THIS WORLD

I can honestly remember many times when I did not act wisely, or even worse, when I acted with what the Bible calls "the wisdom of the world" (1 Cor. 1:20 NIV) Perhaps you can say the same thing. A good question is: What is wrong with "worldly wisdom"? Let's allow Scripture to clarify this.

The wisdom of this world is foolishness to God.
For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, since it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness" (1 Cor. 3:19).

The wisdom of this world is jealous and selfish.
For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic (James 3:15 NLT).

The wisdom of this world is not a way to know God.
For since, in God's wisdom, the world did not know God through wisdom, God was pleased to save those who believe through the foolishness of what is preached (1 Cor. 1:21).

Therefore, the wisdom of the world, a result of sin and under the influence of Satan, is a means of destruction. In fact, it's not wise at all!

THE WISDOM OF GOD

So, what does God consider wisdom? Proverbs explains it this way: "Fear of the LORD is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment" (9:10 NLT).

Before you jump to the wrong conclusion, let me clarify that the word *fear* isn't what some might assume. It's not the fear of bugs or rodents, nor the fear that comes after hearing bad news or a serious diagnosis, which can paralyze you, even for a moment, and make your stomach turn. The Hebrew word for fear, *yirah,* implies respect, reverence, and devout piety. This is the starting point for us.

A wise woman will show respect and reverence for God. You and I need to understand who God is: the sovereign creator of life and everything around us. His title alone merits reverence. To show God respect and reverence, we must know the principles He has established, what He loves, what displeases Him, and how He expects us to live . . . and then act accordingly. That is the foundation of wisdom!

The second part of the last verse we read indicates that *knowing* the Holy One gives us good judgment. What if I told you that wisdom is a *person* we can get to know? Look at what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:30:

"It is from him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom from God for us—our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

Again, in 1 Corinthians 1:24, Christ is presented to us as the "wisdom of God." So, if we want divine wisdom, we need Christ in our lives! We cannot attain God's wisdom outside a relationship with

Him. Our pursuit of wisdom must be linked to Christ because *in Him is all wisdom.*

The question, then, is how to gain wisdom for daily life. This is where developing a relationship becomes necessary, because one can't truly get to know someone from a distance, and building relationships takes time and effort. How, then, do we cultivate a relationship with God if we cannot see or touch Him? Through regular prayer and by reading and studying His Word. There is no other way.

THE PATHWAY TO WISDOM

As with everything else we want, acquiring wisdom begins with a desire for it. Generally, when we want something, it's because we value it. This becomes the groundwork: the longing to be wise women in the ways of God because we value and appreciate wisdom. The book of Proverbs conveys this message in various ways, as in the following passage:

"If you prize wisdom, she will make you great. Embrace her, and she will honor you. She will place a lovely wreath on your head; she will present you with a beautiful crown." (4:8–9 NLT)

However, it's not enough to simply desire it. We need to ask God, the source of all wisdom, to grant it to us. Asking for wisdom should be a daily prayer, because as long as we are on this side of eternity, we will always need it. The best part is that He Himself invites us to pray this way:

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. (James 1:5 NIV)

Much of Proverbs is attributed to King Solomon. Even those who have never held a Bible in their hands have heard phrases such as "Solomonic solution," "not even Solomon in all his splendor," and

"King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived." This is because this Jewish king, when given the opportunity by God Himself to ask for anything he wanted, asked for only one thing: wisdom to "know the difference between right and wrong" (1 Kings 3:9 NLT). Notice God's response to Solomon's request:

Now it pleased the Lord that Solomon had requested this. So God said to him, "Because you have requested this and did not ask for long life or riches for yourself, or the death of your enemies, but you asked discernment for yourself to administer justice, I will therefore do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has never been anyone like you before and never will be again." (vv. 10–12)

It pleases God when we yearn for His wisdom! What a relief to know that *Christ* is our wisdom and that, even when we don't act wisely, He will sustain us in His grace.

In the end, we need to act. Being a wise woman means intentionally seeking wisdom. As is often the case, good results will follow. I think nothing says it better than another passage from Proverbs:

Listening closely to wisdom and directing your heart to understanding . . . if you seek it like silver and search for it like hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God. (2:2, 4–5)

Where do we seek wisdom? In God's Word. Psalm 19:7 tells us that: "the testimony of the LORD is trustworthy, making the inexperienced wise." The good judgment we long for and the wisdom we desire can be found in the pages of the Bible. As we seek and discover what God has already spoken, that knowledge, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, will serve as our foundation.

It is, however, very important to remember that when we read the Word of God without the help of the Holy Spirit, we will simply be reading another book. We need Him to understand the divine truths it contains. Observe what Jesus Himself said: "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach

you all things and *remind* you of everything I have told you" (John 14:26, emphasis added).

The Spirit not only teaches us, but also reminds us. That is exactly what we need every day—Someone to remind us of what God has told us, so that in those moments when we don't know how to act, His wisdom will fill us.

Let's not stop at simply asking. We must also be willing to obey what God tells us, to seek to know Him, and to act with respect and reverence. This will lead us to demonstrate wisdom, both in the most important matters and in the less important ones.

Therefore, since every successful transformation must begin from the inside out, let's dedicate the next chapter to the place where every wise decision begins.



Prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank You for being a wise God who loves me, despite my lack of wisdom. Thank You for promising in Your Word that I can ask for wisdom and You will give it to me. God, here I am before You, asking You to clothe me with wisdom. Forgive me for the times I have followed human rather than divine wisdom. I want to get to know You better so I can excercise good judgment. Holy Spirit, show me the truths in the Word and remind me of them when I am about to forget them. Lord, I want to be a wise woman, wife, and mother. Please help me make that my goal always! In Jesus's name, amen.*



FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Read Proverbs 2:6.
What is the source of wisdom?

In which areas of your life do you want to be wiser?
List them.

Read Proverbs 2:12, 3:13, and 19:8.
What are the benefits of acquiring wisdom?

What differences are there between being
an intelligent woman and a wise woman?

INTELLIGENT WOMAN	WISE WOMAN

Where do we begin the process of becoming
a wise woman of God? Why?

WHAT MAKES A LIFE GOOD?

Accomplishments? Intelligence? Relationships?

According to Scripture, wisdom and living by God's design is what paves the path to the good life.

Based on the principles found in the book of Proverbs, *A Wise Woman* offers today's woman the tools she needs to live life to the fullest and make wise decisions in all aspects of daily life.

In this book, author Wendy Bellow points you to Scripture that will show you:

- *How to speak and listen wisely*
- *How to bless those around you with your words and actions*
- *How to build your home and relationships, not break them down*
- *How to make your home and relationships stronger, not weaker*
- *How to navigate life's most common issues with God's wisdom*

Written to be used by individuals or in a group study, each chapter ends with questions for reflection and deeper thinking.

God's principles are designed for our good, and that good is found by living in His wisdom and His ways. Learn practical ways to engage these principles as you read *A Wise Woman*.



WENDY BELLO is a Bible teacher and speaker. She is the author of *A New Heart, A Wise Woman, Transformational Decisions, Worthy, Beyond My Prayer List,* and *God with Us*. She serves in the women's ministry at her local church and contributes to organizations such as The Gospel Coalition and Revive Our Hearts. Born in Cuba, she now lives in Miami, Florida, with her husband, Abel. They have two young adult children. Wendy holds a master's degree in Theological Studies from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

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