

“Wisdom vs. Folly”

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by

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1. Introduction
2. Title of the lesson = “Wisdom vs. Folly”
 - a. This is an intensely practical subject!
 - b. We all understand the difference between “wise” and “foolish” behavior:
 - i. Two teens get in a car crash on I-75:
 1. One dies because he doesn’t have his seat belt on.
 2. The other survives because he is buckled up.
 - a. Lesson learned:
 - i. It’s foolish to drive without seat belts.
 - ii. It’s wise to drive with seat belts on.
 - ii. Two brothers have very different lifestyles:
 1. One smokes, drinks and doesn’t take care of himself.
 2. The other exercises, eats well, and takes good care of himself.
 - a. One has constant health problems and dies early.
 - b. The other is relatively healthy and lives longer.
 - i. Lesson learned:
 1. It’s foolish to neglect your health.
 2. It’s wise to take care of yourself.
 - iii. Two sisters have very different financial habits:
 1. One spends all she has on the latest fashions and products.
 2. The other works hard, saves diligently, and invests wisely.
 - a. One is constantly broke and dependant on others.
 - b. The other enjoys financial freedom and security.
 - i. Lesson learned:
 1. It’s foolish to spend all you have.
 2. It’s wise to work hard, save some, and invest smartly.
 - c. The reason certain behavior is “wise” and other behavior is “foolish” is that there are “laws of nature” that exist in our world:
 - i. The force of a high speed car crash will cause injury, unless a restraining device is used.
 - ii. The cumulative effect of smoking, drinking and poor eating habits will cause your health to deteriorate, unless you start living healthy.

- iii. Spending more money than you make will eventually lead to bankruptcy, unless you change your financial habits.
- d. Q: What if I don't believe in the laws of nature?
- e. A: I am still governed by them.
 - i. The only choice that we have is whether to live in harmony with them or in opposition to them.
- f. In the same way: there are spiritual laws as well:
 - i. "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18)
 - ii. "...a prostitute is a deep pit and a wayward wife is a narrow well." (Proverbs 23:27-28)
 - 1. A man who uses a prostitute is falling into a spiritual pit and a narrow well - tough to get out of; tough to come back from.
 - iii. "He who gives to the poor will lack nothing, but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses." (Proverbs 28:27).
- g. Q: What if we don't believe in these spiritual laws?
- h. A: We are still governed by them!
 - i. Prideful men will fall - eventually!
 - 1. (Usually in this life; always in the next!)
 - ii. Men who use prostitutes are in a spiritual pit!
 - 1. (Just watch what happens when their wife finds out...)
 - iii. Those who close their eyes to the poor are cursed by God!
 - 1. (Perhaps in their relationships, their personal peace, etc.)
- i. The only choice that we have is whether or not to live in harmony with these laws or in opposition to them.
 - i. And that is the definition of "wise" and "foolish":
 - 1. The "wise" person lives in harmony with spiritual laws.
 - 2. The "fool" lives in ignorance or opposition to spiritual laws.
 - a. Q: Are you "wise" or "foolish"?
 - i. Your life is the evidence...
- j. Some laws in life are both natural and spiritual:
 - i. Proverbs 10:4 = "Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth."
 - 1. You're just as likely to read this admonition in a business book as a spiritual book.
- k. But sometimes we can live in harmony with natural laws and neglect spiritual laws:
 - i. Luke 12:13-31 = "Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."
 - 14Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" 15Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your

guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

16And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. 17He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'

18"Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."'

20"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

21"This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

1. In this case, the world would say: He's wise!
 - a. (On cover of "Fortune 500" magazine...)
 2. But Jesus says: "You fool!"
 - a. He was not rich toward God!
 - i. He neglected the poor!
 - ii. He only thought of his own pleasure!
 - iii. He didn't serve God.
- l. The truly "wise" person:
- i. Lives in harmony with both natural and spiritual laws.
 - ii. He does not whine, complain, and blame everyone else!
 1. Proverbs 19:3 = "A man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the LORD."
 - iii. He simply learns the rules of life, and figures out how to be successful.
 1. That's smart!
 2. That's wise!
 3. And that's what the book of Proverbs is all about...
- m. Proverbs 1:1-7 = "The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:
- 2 for attaining wisdom and discipline;
 - for understanding words of insight;
 - 3 for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair;
 - 4 for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young-
 - 5 let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance-
 - 6 for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.

7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and discipline."

- i. I used to think I missed the class on "how to live" at school.
 1. (Was I absent that day?)
 - a. Now I realize: the textbook on "how to live" is the Bible, and many of the practicals are in the book of Proverbs.
3. Transition => Q: So, how "wise" or "foolish" are you?
 - a. Q: Are you living in harmony or in ignorance or opposition to the spiritual laws of life?
 - b. Let's look at three biblical ways to measure how "wise" or "foolish" we are:
4. First way to measure how "wise" or "foolish" we are: Q: Are you learning from your mistakes?
 - a. Proverbs 1:20-33

"Wisdom calls aloud in the street,
she raises her voice in the public squares;
21 at the head of the noisy streets [c] she cries out,
in the gateways of the city she makes her speech:
22 "How long will you simple ones [d] love your simple ways?
How long will mockers delight in mockery
and fools hate knowledge?
23 If you had responded to my rebuke,
I would have poured out my heart to you
and made my thoughts known to you.
24 But since you rejected me when I called
and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand,
25 since you ignored all my advice
and would not accept my rebuke,
26 I in turn will laugh at your disaster;
I will mock when calamity overtakes you-
27 when calamity overtakes you like a storm,
when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind,
when distress and trouble overwhelm you.
28 "Then they will call to me but I will not answer;
they will look for me but will not find me.
29 Since they hated knowledge
and did not choose to fear the LORD,
30 since they would not accept my advice
and spurned my rebuke,
31 they will eat the fruit of their ways
and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.
32 For the waywardness of the simple will kill them,
and the complacency of fools will destroy them;

33 but whoever listens to me will live in safety
and be at ease, without fear of harm."

- b. Hebrews 12:7-11 = "Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."
 - i. "hardship" is discipline from God.
 - ii. Q: Is it making you "better" or "bitter"?
 - iii. Q: Do you even recognize God's hand in your hardships or are you spiritually dull?
 1. Hebrews 5:11 = "We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn."
 - a. Maturity is being in tune with God; listening and responding to God properly.
 - i. Hebrews 12:5 = "And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons:
"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline,
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,
because the Lord disciplines those he loves,
and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."
 - c. Q: Are you learning from your mistakes, and from God's discipline, or do you repeat the same foolish behavior?
 - i. Proverbs 26:1 = "As a dog returns to its vomit,
so a fool repeats his folly."
 - ii. Proverbs 27:22 = "Though you grind a fool in a mortar,
grinding him like grain with a pestle,
you will not remove his folly from him."
 - d. M.P. = So, a first measurement of wisdom vs. folly = Q: Are you learning from your mistakes?
5. Second way to measure how "wise" or "foolish" we are: Q: How much does the fear of the Lord factor into your decision-making?

- a. Proverbs 14:16 = "A wise man fears the LORD and shuns evil, but a fool is hotheaded and reckless."
 - i. The awareness of an ever-watchful God should greatly influence your decisions!
 - 1. The fool acts like:
 - a. there is no God
 - b. and if there is a God, he either:
 - i. can't see me
 - ii. or won't punish me.
 - 1. But the wise man understands
Galatians 6:7-8 = "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life."
 - b. Proverbs 15:33 = "The fear of the LORD teaches a man wisdom..."
 - i. When making decisions, start with the fear of the Lord, and then consider all the other factors.
 - 1. Example: contribution.
 - c. M.P. = A second measurement of wisdom vs. folly: Q: How much does the fear of the Lord factor into your decision-making?
6. A third way to measure how "wise" or "foolish" we are: Q: How earnestly do you seek wisdom every day?
 - a. Proverbs 2:1-5 = "My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, 2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, 3 and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, 4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, 5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God."
 - i. The wise man makes earnestly seeking God a daily habit:
 - 1. Hebrews 11:6 = "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."
 - b. M.P. = A third measurement of wisdom vs. folly: Q: How earnestly do you seek wisdom every day?
7. Summary

- a. Just as there are “laws of nature” like gravity, there are also “spiritual laws” like “God opposes the proud”.
 - i. These laws govern everyone, whether we believe in them or not.
 - ii. We only have two choices:
 - 1. Live in harmony with these spiritual laws – which makes us wise.
 - 2. Or live in ignorance or opposition to these spiritual laws – which makes us foolish.
- b. We looked at three biblical ways to measure how “wise” or “foolish” we are:
 - i. One: Q: Are you learning from your mistakes?
 - ii. Two: Q: How much does the fear of the Lord factor into your decision-making?
 - iii. Three: Q: How earnestly do you seek wisdom every day?
- c. “Wisdom vs. Folly” ... I hope you choose wisdom!