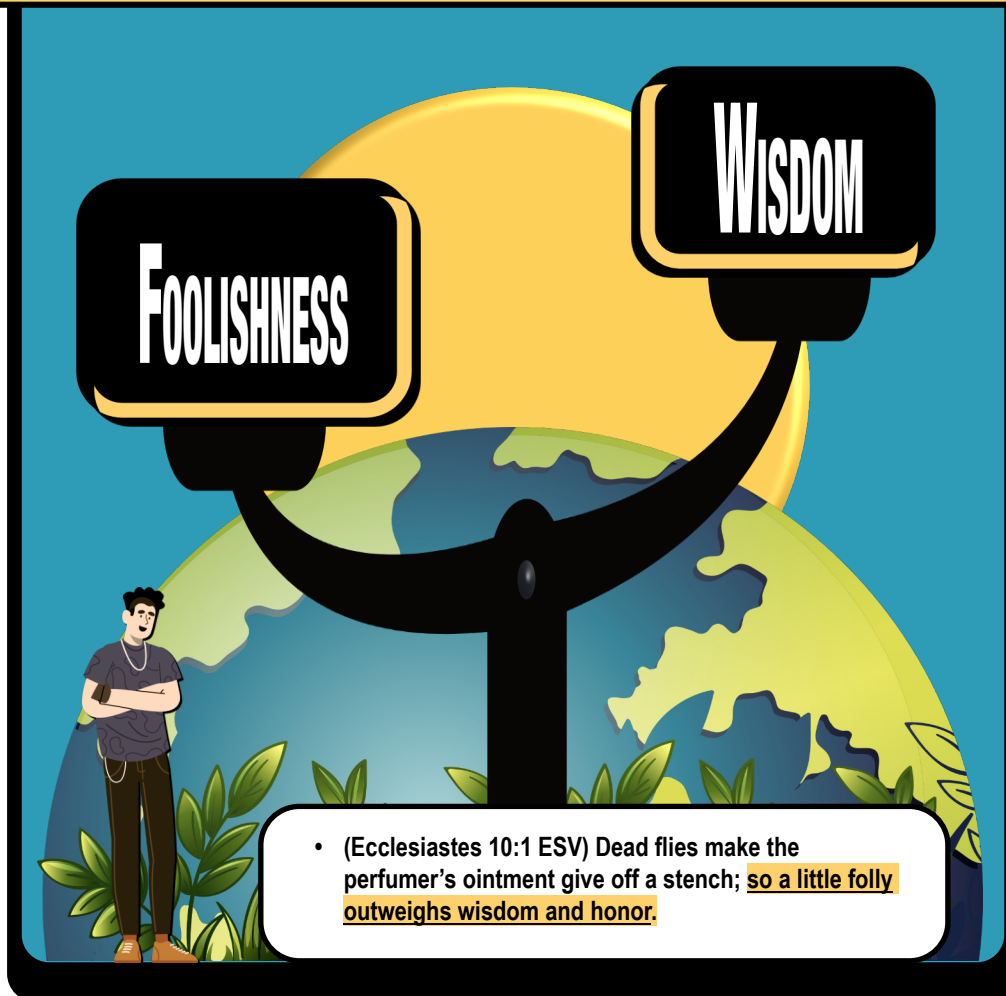


UNDER THE SUN ...

WISDOM IS BETTER BUT FOOLISHNESS WEIGHS MORE



HOW DOES A LITTLE FOLLY OUTWEIGH WISDOM AND HONOR?

- To understand this we must understand and define the terms biblically. *Foolishness* is living by human standards of what is right and wrong. *Wisdom* is living by God's standards of what is right and wrong.
- What the Preacher in Ecclesiastes means by the expression that foolishness "weighs more" than wisdom and honor is that in everyday life under the sun humans prefer deciding what is good and evil over what God teaches in the Bible to be good and evil. And this should come as no surprise at all to us as we can look back where it all began in Genesis three when Eve decided that she would choose what is good and evil and disobeyed God's command. And this has been the dominant practice since that time.

**—WISDOM IS SUBMITTING TO THE WILL OF GOD
AND LIVING AS HE DIRECTS US TO LIVE—**

I. The wise person does the truth of the LORD our God “in the land.”

- (Deuteronomy 4:5–6a ESV) See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, **that you should do them in the land** that you are entering to take possession of it. 6 **Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding** in the sight of the peoples.

A. Only those who are saved have the ability to know and receive the truths that enable us to live wisely.

- (1 Corinthians 2:12–14 NLT) And we have received God’s Spirit (not the world’s spirit), **so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us**. 13 When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit’s words to explain spiritual truths. 14 **But people who aren’t spiritual can’t receive these truths from God’s Spirit**. It all sounds foolish to them and they can’t understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means.

B. When we do what is true, we come to the light.

- (John 3:21 ESV) **But whoever does what is true comes to the light**, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.

C. When we obey God’s word, we fulfill the purpose for which we were created—to do the will of God.

- (Luke 11:27–28 ESV) As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!” 28 But he said, **“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”**
- (Matthew 12:49–50 ESV) And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! 50 **For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven** is my brother and sister and mother.”

II. The fool denies the existence of God and lives in a way that seems right to him.

- (Proverbs 14:12 ESV) **There is a way that seems right to a man**, but its end is the way to death.

A. The biblical description of the fool is that he denies the existence of God in his innermost being.

- (Psalm 14:1 ESV) The fool says in his heart, “There is **no God**.” They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good.

Fools live in a world without God. Any so-called god that would be acceptable to a fool would be a god of his own creation. There is no place for God as he is revealed in the Bible in the fool’s world. But the very God that the fool denies and defies has written his truth on the fool’s heart and by that truth God will one day judge the rebellious fool.

- (Romans 2:15–16 NLT) **They demonstrate that God’s law is written in their hearts**, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right. 16 And this is the message I proclaim—**that the day is coming when God, through Christ Jesus, will judge everyone’s secret life**.

B. In the first act of foolishness Eve disobeyed the direct command of God in pursuit of wisdom.

- (Genesis 3:6 ESV) So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, **and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise**, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

**—WISDOM IS BETTER BUT NOT AS VALUED AS
FOOLISHNESS IN EVERYDAY LIFE UNDER THE SUN—**

IF YOU DOUBT THIS, REMEMBER THAT WISDOM IS KNOWING, RECEIVING AND LIVING IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD’S WORD. AND THEN ASK ... DO MOST PEOPLE ON EARTH VALUE LIVING IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD’S WORD?

I. Wisdom is better than might but is soon despised and disregarded when providing no further immediate benefit, 9:13-16.

- (Ecclesiastes 9:13–16 ESV) I have also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me. 14 There was a little city with few men in it, and a great king came against it and besieged it, building great siegeworks against it. 15

But there was found in it a poor, wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man. 16 **But I say that wisdom is better than might**, though the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard.

The poor in the land only hold a position of prominence in proportion to their immediate value or usefulness. A person's staying power or influence is dictated by societal values highly regarded "under the sun" at a given time. In other words—how does this help me now.

An example in the world at large would be the power and popularity given over the last several years to those who embrace social justice, climate change, gay/lesbian rights, etc.

An example in the church would be those who embrace a skewed belief in the love of God and so reject sound doctrine and biblical authority in the name of love and unity.

II. The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the loud voice of the one in power prevails, 9:17.

- (Ecclesiastes 9:17 ESV) **The words of the wise heard in quiet are better** than the shouting of a ruler among fools.

A. The words of the wise are better because of content and not volume.

B. The words of the wise heard in quiet are then properly received and understood for what they are.

- (Psalm 23:1–3 ESV) The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. **He leads me beside still waters.** 3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- (Isaiah 30:15 ESV) For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, "**In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.**" But you were unwilling.
- (Isaiah 32:17 ESV) And the effect of righteousness will be peace, **and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.**

C. The loud voice of the ruler generally prevails and carries the room.

Those who are in power generally are those who make the most noise and end up making and enforcing their rules. This is what typically prevails "under the sun."

III. Wisdom is better than weapons of war but one sinner is able to destroy the much good that wisdom brings, 9:18.

- (Ecclesiastes 9:18 ESV) **Wisdom is better than weapons of war**, but one sinner destroys much good.

A. We are warned in the OT of the deadly and dangerous root of bitterness that comes when one sinner turns away from the LORD our God and follows the desires of his or her own heart.

- (Deuteronomy 29:18–20 NLT) I am making this covenant with you **so that no one among you—no man, woman, clan, or tribe—will turn away from the LORD our God** to worship these gods of other nations, **and so that no root among you bears bitter and poisonous fruit.** 19 Those who hear the warnings of this curse should not congratulate themselves, thinking, "**I am safe, even though I am following the desires of my own stubborn heart.**" **This would lead to utter ruin!** 20 The LORD will never pardon such people. Instead his anger and jealousy will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will come down on them, and the LORD will erase their names from under heaven.

B. We are warned to guard against that same "root of bitterness" in the NT.

- (Hebrews 12:15 ESV) See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; **that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.**

IV. A little folly outweighs and spoils wisdom and honor under the sun, 10:1.

- (Ecclesiastes 10:1 ESV) Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off a stench; **so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.**

A. Foolishness carries more weight "under the sun" than does wisdom.

It all comes down to the values of the social group that is in power. It should be very clear to us that the vast majority in society value choosing their own way over submitting to the instruction and authority of God and his word. This is the way of the world.

- (Isaiah 53:6 ESV) All we like sheep have gone astray; **we have turned—every one—to his own way**; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.



“STEADY AS SHE GOES, MATE!”

But what has happened in the leadership in many churches is the same thing that happened with the shepherds in Israel. They have turned to their own way and no longer hold the authority of Scripture in great reverence.

- (Isaiah 56:11 ESV) The dogs have a mighty appetite; they never have enough. **But they are shepherds who have no understanding; they have all turned to their own way,** each to his own gain, one and all.

Our society is dominated by a biblically foolish world view—God is left out in any meaningful or significant way. This is the dominant world view and it “weighs more” than a belief in and submission to God and the authority of his word. In society and in subcultures such as churches where the people do not tremble at the words of God, then God and his word are easily dismissed and people choose their own way.

- (Ezra 9:4 ESV) **Then all who trembled at the words of the God** of Israel, because of the faithlessness of the returned exiles, gathered around me while I sat appalled until the evening sacrifice.
- (Isaiah 66:2 ESV) All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: **he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.**

—WISDOM MAY NOT TYPICALLY WIN IN EVERYDAY LIFE BUT ALWAYS WINS ULTIMATELY FOR THOSE WHO WAIT FOR THE LORD—

- I. **The wise person’s heart inclines him to the right—toward the LORD, 10:2-3.**
 - (Ecclesiastes 10:2-4 ESV) **A wise man’s heart inclines him to the right, but a fool’s heart to the left.** 3 Even when the fool walks on the road, he lacks sense, and he says to everyone that he is a fool. 4 If the anger of the ruler rises against you, **do not leave your place, for calmness will lay great offenses to rest.**
- II. **The fool’s heart inclines him to the left—away from the LORD.**

- III. **Being still before the LORD provides the calmness necessary to endure during times of great duress, 10:4.**

Even when those in power (such as a hostile government or an unfair employer) are against us, we should hold our place by trusting in the LORD during this time of great offense.

- (Psalm 37:7-10 ESV) **Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;** fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! 8 **Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.** 9 For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land. 10 In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there.
- (Psalm 40:1 ESV) **I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry.**
- (Isaiah 30:15 ESV) For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, “In returning and rest you shall be saved; **in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.**” But you were unwilling.
- (Isaiah 32:17 ESV) And **the effect of righteousness** will be peace, **and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.**

- (James 5:7-11 ESV) **Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.** See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. 8 **You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.** 9 **Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged;** behold, the Judge is standing at the door. 10 As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 **Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast.** You have heard of **the steadfastness of Job,** and you have seen **the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.**