

A Little Foolishness
Ecclesiastes 10:1-20
Reading: 2 Tim 3:13-17

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How do you *measure* **wisdom & honor**?

- I read in **Pr 16** - *How much better it is to get wisdom than gold!*
- Then in **22:1** – *A good name is to be more desired than great wealth, favor is better than silver & gold.*

So acquiring a *good reputation & godly wisdom* are a big deal in God's Kingdom!

But Solomon has a *sad math lesson* for the *careless soul*: did you know that a **dab** of *foolishness* can **outweigh** a **bucket** of *wisdom*?

Turn w/ me to Eccl 10:1-20

All King Solomon shares (*good & bad*) in **Eccl**, he's discovered in his *search for fulfillment* → *life's meaning*. What makes the world *tick*?

The king has written about *wisdom*, now he shares some thoughts about *foolishness*.

But of course, the only *good reason* to think about foolishness is so you can *see it coming*, & **avoid it!** ☺

Five windows on the ways of a fool:

1. When the fool *walks* (1-3). (this evening)
2. When the fool *rules* (4-7).
3. When the fool *works* (8-11).
4. When the fool *speaks* (12-15) (next Sunday, *Lord willing*)
5. When the fool *parties* (16-20).

Solomon makes his point right up front (v.1): even a little foolishness is way too much!

...pray...

When the fool *walks* (1-3).

1. Solomon begins his *analysis of folly* w/ **two** proverbs. (**3000**; 1 Kg 4:32)!

a. **1st**: *A little foolishness can make a big stink (v.1).*

- i. Costly perfume oil was *bottled* in Solomon's time, just like it is today. The picture here is of a batch of expensive *oil*, *contaminated* as small, pesky *flies* get trapped on its surface.
- ii. The little flies *die & decay*, & the perfume is *ruined*. When you open the bottle, expecting a *sweet aroma*, your nose is attacked by a *nasty odor*.
- iii. Think about how much value the Bible places on *wisdom* & a *godly reputation (honor)*!
- iv. But a little *foolishness* (a *silly slip*) can undo the honor of an otherwise wise *man* or *administration* or *ministry*! A careless **word**; a regrettable **indiscretion**.
- v. **Point (big idea in ch10)?** *Little things can make a big (bad) impact!*

b. **2nd**: *Foolishness is a wrong-headed heart issue (v.2).*

- i. The Bible pictures the **heart** as so much more than the seat of your *feelings*. The **heart** was a symbol of the *command center* of your entire life. Your **heart** is the *real you*! Which way will your **heart** lead you?
- ii. The Bible often symbolizes the *right hand* as the position or direction of *honor*. So the *left* is just the **opposite**. In fact, we get the English word for *sinister* from the Latin for *left hand* (*sin i stra*).
- iii. Wisdom & foolishness are **180 deg polar opposites**. The wise man's mind (*heart*) is attuned to God & eternal things. But the *fool* has a **heart problem**; his very nature *steers him* down the *wrong path*. Away from *godly wisdom*...

2. *You can spot a fool a mile away!*

- a. In **WW2** *civil defense* patrols memorized the *profiles & sounds* of friendly & **unfriendly** aircraft. You can spot a fool by the way he *walks* & the way he *talks* & by the pattern of his *camouflage*!
- b. Here's an example! Ever seen a kid walking down the street with his *pants-waist* sagging below his bottom!?! What was your *first thought* (Nice boxers!)?
- c. In general, the way you dress is a *billboard for your heart*. But not just the way you *dress*! Here are some more *conspicuous signs* of folly: Fools **talk** too *loud*, **act** *arrogantly*, **flirt** *shamelessly*, **ignore** the *rights & needs* of others, ... **rebel** against *spiritual truth* (*The fool has said in his heart...*).
- d. You can *spot a fool* a mile away!

Solomon has started out with the *profile* of a *foolish lifestyle*. When a fool wanders by, *you'll know!*

When the fool *rules* (4-7).

1. Solomon *weaves* a lot of *wisdom* about **rulers & folly** into **ch. 10**. Here is a hard *fact of life*: not *all* leaders are *good* leaders. In fact, sometimes, someone ends up in charge, and there seems to be *no good reason at all!*
2. *What if you make a bad leader mad?* Wise King Solomon says, “*Stay calm!*” The key here (4) is *composure...self-control*.
 - a. Don’t simply *fold* like a *house of cards*. Don’t *run away* from the problem. Don’t *blow-up*, either. *Stay calm*.
 - b. **Pr 15:1** - *A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*
 - c. This advice is *especially effective* if you already stand on the foundation of a reputation for *wisdom & virtue*; just like the *wise man* in **v.2**.
3. *Palace walls* and *security cameras* are no guarantee against *folly in high places*.
 - a. Solomon says bad leadership is a *great evil*. It is all too common when men *live & govern under the sun* (*ignoring god’s ways & wisdom*).
 - b. You might label it a *royal reversal*. *Fools rule & proven leaders* (evidenced by the blessings of their own *personal prosperity*) are forced into the *background*.
 - c. Then Solomon illustrates the frustration of *reversals* w/ an unlikely word-picture (**read v.7**). Slaves *ride* while their pedigreed masters *walk*.
 - i. Few people rode *horses* in the **ANE**. They were *too expensive* to acquire & *too expensive* to maintain.
 - ii. *Noblemen & cavalrymen* rode horses, but *not* very many others.
 - iii. A slave in the *saddle*? A fool on the *throne*? That *just doesn’t seem right!*

- d. Look again at this *topsy-turvy political picture*, then go back to Solomon's assessment in **v. 5**. When someone in power makes a *mistake*, it has *big impact*. When someone in power is **prone** to *error*, because they are *foolish (unqualified)*, the potential for *calamity* is *multiplied*.
4. Beloved, Solomon is warning you that you *won't* always *approve of* whose charge, but you have to *respond w/ wisdom*!
 - a. **V.2** – Program your own heart w/ *wisdom*. Walk the *right road* daily.
 - b. **V.4** – When problems (*opposition*) arise, *stay calm*.
 - c. Recall a *greater lesson* that appears time & again in Eccl: God is in *control*, even when life seems *confusing* or just plain *wrong (7:14)*:
In the day of prosperity be happy, but in the day of adversity consider – God has made the one as well as the other so that man will not discover anything that will be after him.

Just be warned: sometimes the fool rules.

When the fool *works* (read 8-11).

1. Pastor Chas Swindoll makes a great observation on these verses. *Fools just don't seem to see danger coming!* What makes that especially *troublesome* is that danger lurks in the most *ordinary tasks*. Solomon names *five*: *digging* pits, *breaking down* walls, *quarrying* stone, *splitting* logs, *chopping* wood.
 - a. The *farmer* or *laborer* or *hunter* digs a deep hole, then *stumbles* into his own pit. (Then what if he was so foolish he forget to *recharge* his *cell phone*!?!)
 - b. The *worker* sets about to tear down a *wall*. (Maybe to build a big & better *barn*!) He seems on the road to *success*, when suddenly he draws back his hand with an oath: *snake-bit!* The *serpent* was *sunning itself* on the other *side*...
 - c. We have rock quarries around Sedalia... The man in the *quarry* is *pinned* under the very stone he's cut.
 - d. Do you cut your own *firewood*? Solomon says be careful! **Noah & I just survived a log-splitter in Joplin last week.** We were trying to reduce a large chunk of *stump*. It was *ornery!* Finally, a piece of oak the size of a *brick* split loose with a *pop*, and *flew* past our heads and landed **15** feet away! *Praise God for His mercy*, but I should have put that *stump* on the burn-pile to *begin with!*
 - e. Take care of your *tools* & they'll take care of *you!* Speaking of *cutting firewood*, keep your *axe* (*chain*) sharp. A *dull edge* is just *extra work*.
 - i. But not just *extra work*, *extra risk!* When you work tired, you work *carelessly*, & make *poorer decisions*.
 - ii. And whether in the *kitchen* or the *woodlot*, *dull edges* are just more *unpredictable* & *dangerous* than *properly sharpened ones*.

2. Then **v.11** adds another example of *foolishness in the workplace (read)*. I don't think we have any *snake-charmers* in here... ☺ Solomon is saying that no matter how *skilled* you are, if you don't *prepare carefully*, sooner or later, you'll get *bit*!
3. The wise king makes his *point* at the *end of v.10*. No matter what job you're tackling, *wisdom has the advantage of giving success*. I think there's a hint here in Eccl 10 about a practical application of *wisdom*.
 - a. Did you notice that several of these problems seem *avoidable*?
 - b. ***Wisdom looks ahead.*** ...*for proper preparation ...for potential problems!*
 - c. A good *chess player* trains himself to look ahead several *moves*.
 - d. I should have thought harder about that *ugly stump* before I put it in that *splitter*...

Fools go to work, but they just don't seem to see danger coming!

Let's pick up on that last thought about foolishness & wisdom ...

Are you *looking ahead*?

- *Finances.* Budget? Track your expenditures (→ *spend* less than you make)? Working your way out of debt? Save?
- *Health.* Are you ignoring a potential health problem?
- *Family.* Do you understand how your kids are wired (differently)? How will you map that into helping them prepare for their future? **Are you taking care of your marriage (takes planning & time)?**

Are you looking ahead *spiritually*?

- Are you *investing* in the *souls of your children & friends*? If your kid goes to a **D1** school on an *academic or athletic scholarship*, but never darkens the door of church again, God won't be impressed. *He who is wise wins souls.* Proverbs 11:30 That should start at home!
- Are you investing time in *God's Word & prayer & good deeds*? Jesus said, "*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth & rust destroy, & where thieves break in & steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rusts destroys, & where thieves do not break in or steal; for where you treasure is, there your heart will be also.*" Mt 6:19-21.
- Similarly, Paul wrote, *For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build on the foundation w/ gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed w/ fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as thru fire.* 1 Cor 3:11-15.

Beloved, don't be *foolish*: *look ahead, & look up (above the sun).*

Be warned, *fools just don't seem to see danger coming!*