

Solomon's Twelve Secrets

Session 10: Solomon's Advice If You Want To Be Counted Among The Wise

Edited Transcript

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Good morning, men. Please turn in your bibles to Ecclesiastes 10, and as we get going this morning we have a couple of shout outs that we want to do. The first one goes to a group called Iron Men and these are 15 men. The group has been meeting for over 20 years, using the video Bible study with us for about 10 years on Tuesdays at 7:00 AM.

The leader of the group now is Mark Dwyer and he was telling me this morning that he has not always been the leader, but he's taken it over and they're located in Ormond Beach. Our group focuses on strengthening men through discipleship, serving others and fellowship with each other. By the way, Mark also leads another Bible study over at the Tomoka Correctional Facility. And so before we give them their warm, rousing Man in the Mirror welcome, a first for us, I'm going to ask Ironman if you would please stand because they, the men for this shout out today are with us. So would you join me in giving these man a very warm, rousing, Man in the Mirror welcome? One, two, three. Hoorah! We are so honored to have you with us. That was fun. That was fun. I loved that.

Okay. Now the other shout out goes to a Man in the Mirror team member, Ron Read, who's been with us since the beginning of the area director initiative. He's the area director for Man in the Mirror Chicagoland. If you're from Chicago, Chicagoland has special meaning to you, I understand.

And he is also the field team chaplain for Man in the Mirror. So Ron says, "I'm passionate about men's discipleship because I've seen way too many men willing to sit on the sidelines instead of leading their families." Ron is also a pastor, by the way. "We get to see real change in how churches lead their men." And so I wonder if you would join me in giving also a warm rousing Man in the Mirror shout out to Ron Read, area director. One, two, three. Hoorah! Ron, we are so honored to have you to be part of the team. Okay.

And then the series that we're in is Solomon's 12 Secrets. The title of the message today, "Solomon's Advice," if you want to be counted among the wise, so the key topic in this chapter is wisdom, or folly and wisdom if you want to go that way. And so as an example of the choice between folly and wisdom, I have in my hand here as you can see, an almost empty bottle of blue fluid.

Would somebody just read what it says on the label?

Okay, this is a pressure washing concentrate and it's colored blue. And what else do you have in the garage in a plastic bottle shaped about like this that's also a blue fluid? windshield washer fluid. And so, when you are in a hurry, it is not good to be hasty and miss the way.

So, when you are in a hurry and you're not being careful because you have a Bible study that you need to get to, it's possible that you could pick up the wrong blue fluid, which I did, but I didn't notice this for about a month. But I kept wondering why does that, why does my windshield, where the windshield wipers didn't go, look so awful and so sticky and so yucky?

And so finally, I got my vehicle washed and I noticed that that yucky, sticky stuff didn't come off, so I took it into the dealer and say, "Hey, what's going on here?" So, they didn't know what was going on. They said it sure doesn't smell like once your washer fluid to us and they emptied it out and everything and the detailer worked on the windshield and everything, fortunately didn't eat up the pay but.

But as it turns out, there's something wrong now with the windshield and the rear as well. And I don't know if it'll ever come out or not or if I'm going to have to have the windows replaced. I don't know if it's a film or if it's etched into that, but this is the kind of thing that can happen to all men. And so we're going to talk about this morning the difference between wisdom and family.

SOME THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT FOOLISHNESS

So, some things to know about foolishness. We're going to be starting at verse one in Ecclesiastes 10: "As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor."

So just as an overview to this chapter, one of the things, what does folly do? Well, a small amount of it can outdo a lot of really wise decisions. Let me give you an example.

There is a man here in town who's very prominent and I've known him for a long time. He was doing some government work. He was consulting. He was a consultant for the government. And because of the work that he was doing, he received several death threats. So, he went and got a concealed weapon permit and bought a handgun, learned how to use it, threw it in his glove box and basically forgot about it.

One day, he was driving on the highway and he got into an altercation. A road rage altercation erupted between him and two men and another car. There were gestures and words exchanged, and these two men began to chase my friend. And this chase lasted for several miles. And finally, these two men got my friend cornered and he was in fear for his life, so he reached into his glove box and pulled out his concealed weapon and began to brandish it at these two men making threatening statements.

When the police arrived, the two men said that they were in fear for their lives because this man had brandished this weapon and my friend ended up getting arrested. Turns out, the two men have extremely long criminal records, and so my friend ended up only having to do community service, but it is interesting how one hasty decision, one foolish decision can outweigh so much good. So much good.

Verse two, still in the overview: "So, the heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left." Well, what does this mean? It basically just means there are two ways of doing things. That's what it really means. There are two ways of doing things.

There's a wise way and a foolish way. So, let's scroll down to verse five. Solomon writes, "There is an evil I have seen under the sun, the sort of evil that arises from a ruler. Fools are put in many high positions, while the rich occupy the low ones. I've seen slaves on horseback while princes go on foot like slaves."

So, part of foolishness, one of the things we know about foolishness is that rulers, people in authority can make foolish decisions. Scroll down to verse 11. "If a snake bites before it is charmed, the charmer receives no fee." Why? Because he's bad. Snake charming. I couldn't. I couldn't pass this up this morning. I had to do a little extra work on that, because I kind of always wondered, you know, what's going on with the cobra and the man with the little thing? And so, I found out how it works.

First of all, there's some magic healing kind of thing, but it's really evolved in entertainment. But a cobra apparently is extremely venomous, but it's also not very aggressive and it's pretty slow. And so what a snake charmer does is he has a gourd called a pungi and the snake, when it sees this snake charmer moving around and playing this music, it goes into a striking position, but the snake charmer is usually smart enough to put the snake far enough away that it's outside of the striking distance. This is why snake charmers don't get killed. Sometimes, they sew their mouths shut too, by the way, just that doesn't seem very fair.

But anyway, that's just like, totally random. But the point is that yeah, that would be one of the foolish things to do, is let yourself, you know, be bit by a bad situation. Okay.

Verse 13: "At the beginning, their words are folly. At the end, they're wicked madness and fools multiply words." So, I think what this means is that if it starts wrong, it's only going to get worse. And so, one of the things we know about folly is that folly is bound up in the heart of a child. Right? Well, some adults, too. But the point is, is that when you start from a foolish premise, it's not going to get better. It's just gonna keep getting worse. And so that's why there's wisdom in the abundance of many counselors.

Verse 16: "Woe to the land whose king was a servant, and whose princes feast in the morning." That's something that sounds pretty foolish, right? "Blessed is the land whose king is of noble birth and whose princes eat at a proper time for strength and not for drunkenness." And so just some of the impacts of wisdom. Verse 18: "Through laziness, the rafters sag. Because of idle hands, the house leaks."

So, there's just some of the things in this particular chapter about foolishness. Now a lot of Ecclesiastes, all of Proverbs, and a lot of Ecclesiastes, they're written as maxims or axioms or proverbs. And so, he's stringing together ideas around a cluster, this cluster of wisdom, but they're different ideas. And so it's kinda hard to put together the arc of a message that's a single story. But I think we might've been able to figure out how to do that.

But this gives you an idea, some things to know about foolishness. Well, why do wise men make foolish mistakes? Why do wise men make foolish mistakes, besides the fact that we're human?

Well, that's probably enough, right? Wise men make mistakes because of a principle that I discovered while watching football. You all have made this same discovery. You may say it a different way, but here's the way I say it. Men under pressure make mistakes. Men under pressure make mistakes. And so, the offense, first of all, football's based on deception. You're try to deceive the other team and to what you're really trying to do at any particular point. But the defense will blitz. Why do they blitz? Because they try to pressure on the offense. Why? Because men under pressure make mistakes.

On the offense, they're rushing up the line and doing a hurry up offense. Why? To catch the defense off guard, not in the right position. Why? Because men under pressure make mistakes.

And so when we are under pressure, we will make mistakes and the question would be what can we do about it? So, I'm going to give you a Big Idea today that is a little larger than the arc of the message today, but it is, it is a life principle that I have used. If you worked at Man in the Mirror, you would have heard this hundreds of times. Because what happens is, is that we have these decisions that need to be made and they just seem like they have to be made right now or the world's going to come through with it. Oh!

And there's this kind of urgent, frenetic, "Oh, we got to do something. What are we going to do? Oh, this person needs an answer right away. Oh!"

And so I came up with this sentence, I don't know, 20 years ago. And I think it might also have backfired on me a few times, too. But it's the Big Idea for the day and I think it's the solution to why do men sometimes make foolish mistakes.

Because men under pressure make mistakes. I think this is part of the answer. The Big Idea today: **There are very few things in life that can't wait two weeks.**

So, if you got sick today and had the flu for the next two weeks, what would happen? Is the world going to come to an end? Will your work, somehow, result in your demise?

Is the snake going to bite you and you're going to die, if for some reason in the next two weeks, you're not able to, some of you, myself included, have been through situations where you have been put on the sideline for a couple of weeks or more. And life goes on.

I've often said it's pretty amazing to be as old as I am and really only be two weeks behind on my bills. That's not bad. That's not bad. There are very few things in life that can't wait two weeks.

SOME THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT WISDOM

Okay, so now we talked about some things to know about foolishness. Let's talk about some things to know about wisdom and I just want to make these points. James 1:19 says, "My dear brothers and sisters, it is good to remember this. Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger."

And so, all men are going to make both wise and foolish decisions. Solomon, you make up your own mind on this, I don't think Solomon is trying to say that there are foolish men and wise men. I think what Solomon is saying, there are men and sometimes they do wise things and sometimes they do foolish things.

And so the difference usually, in my own experience, is how quickly we respond. It's just how quickly we respond. Are we slow to speak, slow too slow to get angry, or do we fly off the handle? So, I wrote this down. "He who hesitates is wise." Proverbs 14:8, "The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways." Proverbs 14, verse 8. Worth writing down for some of you. "The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways."

Wisdom usually takes time. Wisdom usually takes time. I worked with a man once, he was the controller for my real estate company when I was in that field and every time I asked him a question, he would say,

"Well, let me get back to you on that," and he did that because he was extremely conscientious and didn't want to give a wrong answer, as he was an accountant. He's very particular.

But he also was wanting to be thoughtful and give a thoughtful response. Usually the kinds of questions we were asking: could we do this differently? Could we do that differently? And so, he wanted to think it through and make sure that he wasn't giving a foolish, overly quick answer. So, wisdom usually takes time. And that's what I'm trying to say here is there are very few things in life that can't wait two weeks. Very few things.

APPLICATION: SOLOMON'S KEYS TO WISDOM

Final thing I want us to go into and spend most of our time today is the application part of this and I want to give you Solomon's keys to wisdom. They're out of the chapter that we're looking at here.

Back to football for a second. If you can run a four yard play or more on every down, what'll happen? You win the Super Bowl. If on every play, you can run a four yard or more play, you're gonna win the Super Bowl or if you can for every three plays, you can average 10 or more yards? You're going to win the Super Bowl. And so, what I'm about to show you I really did not, there's no still long bomb here. There's no big yardage play, but these are five four yard plays that are in this text that I think we could pull out here and just remind ourselves. Probably you know all these. Probably. Maybe not, maybe not all of it. Probably you know all these, but it's going to be at least an excellent reminder and maybe you'll pull out something new from this.

So one more thing about football, it's interesting. So if the defense can hold you to three or less yards in every play, what happens? They win the Super Bowl. So, football is fighting over one yard a play. An average of one yard a play. Actually, that's not true, but you get the idea.

All right. I just went ahead, instead of doing a slide here that would build and so forth, I just put it all up here. You can take a picture of the whole thing if you want to or just listen, write it down, whatever. But let's take a look at Solomon's keys to success. And I guess it's six things, right? I can't count.

Six ideas. It's an acrostic. I contorted the ideas here to come up with an acrostic that says wisdom. So let's take a look. Verse one. "Wait until the impulse passes." So I already mentioned my friend who brandished the gun, acted on the impulse. Reading the text again, "So a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor." So a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor. So, wait until the impulse passes. Avoid a single reckless act.

Now, how do you avoid a single reckless act? We had a speaker come here one time and say that most men are one step away from stupid. You remember that? Some of you? That's not true, in my opinion. I mean it's, yeah, one stupid step can be. But the thing is if you do one stupid reckless thing, let's say that you have an affair with a woman that you work with. That didn't just happen. That didn't just happen. You have to turn that over in your mind for months, who knows? Maybe years on end and you turn yourself on the inside into a particular kind of person.

So, when you have that impulse to play around with these lustful thoughts, remember that's the single reckless act that you want to avoid, not three years later when you actually act on it. You want to act on that impulse immediately.

So, whether it's temptation or it's anger, the anger that's going to lead to you eventually alienating your wife or it's the adrenaline that's going to, I tell you, there is something that I'm not doing anymore, so I'm going to finally confess it.

I've had nine Porsches. Some of you may not have known that I've had nine different Porsches. And I love racing. I love tracking. And unfortunately, I like driving fast on the streets, too. And so at the Maitland Interchange, now those of you who are online will not be able to relate to this, but you probably have an interchange like this near you. Don't go there. Don't go there.

The Maitland interchange at 17/92. You come east on Maitland Boulevard and then there's this wide, sweeping turn to the left and then you do another little shorter sweeping turn to the right. And honestly, there are very few things in life I've ever done that are as delicious as taking those two curves at speed

So what you do is I go way, way, way far out to the right as far as I can go out to the right hand side. And then since it's a long sweeping turn, I know when I started into that turn from over here, I know that the apex of that corner is unsighted. It happens to be a storm sewer grate on the other side of a wall that you cannot see when you start into the turn.

And so you slowly bring the car across the track so that you get to the apex and you brush the wall within two inches of the wall and then the car sort of, for some reason gets light and then you. And then, the pavement is properly, what is the?

Banked. You have the camera at the bank. And then the car settles down into the right and then you just swoop around onto 7092. Every time I've done that, I have felt so exhilarated. And then when I'm done, I have the shiver of terror. What did you just do?

Because if there had been say, they shouldn't be there, it'd be their fault too, but if there was a bicyclist there at that grade, at that moment, they would have been pulverized between my car and that wall. So by one reckless act, I could've ruined my life 100 different times.

So understand part of one of the keys to wisdom is, is wait until the impulse passes, before you do some stupid thing like I just described.

All right, second: inhale deeply and remain calm. Oh, I love this. This is one I had memorized a long time ago. "If ruler's anger rises against you, do not leave your post, for calmness can lay great errors to rest." So everybody, I want you to take a deep breath. Inhale. Take another sip. Hold it. Now, slowly exhale. Doesn't that feel great? Doesn't that feel great? Or your wife puts up another sticky note telling you to do the same thing for the 50th time.

And you could say, "Woman, when are you going to understand I'm going to do this chore. You don't have to tell me every time!" So I made this. Okay? Somehow, now I take the trash out to the street. Okay? I don't know how this happened, but it's okay. I'm okay with it. But I take the dumpster thing out to the street. Actually, my wife had back surgery, I think that's how it got started. Back surgery? What kind of excuse is that?

So I'm taking these dumpsters out. You know, trash on Thursday, recycles for Friday. And she's putting these little notes up, trash out, smiley face, recycles out, smiley face. I'm going. You know what she told me last week? I was asking if she could do something differently, and she said, "Well, you know, I have a pet peeve, too."

I said, "Well, what's that honey?" She said, "I can't believe that I keep having to put up these post it notes for you to take out the trash and the recycles every week." Inhale deeply and remain calm.

Okay. Next one. Survey the risks carefully. Eight and nine: "Whoever digs a pit may fall into it. Whoever breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake. Whoever quarry stones may be injured by them. Whoever splits logs may be endangered by them."

Do you remember what we were talking about the last time if you were here, in chapter nine? Life is unfair, unpredictable and fatal, but God is good. That was kind of the conundrum. Okay. How's all that? Make sense? I think it made sense last week. I kind of forgot why it makes sense now. Yeah. Life is unfair, unpredictable and fatal, but God is good. But here again is a reference to this unpredictability. Look, look at these four different things that can happen. Yeah, you dig a pit and you fall in. You break a wall, get bit by a snake. Quarry stones? Get injured. Split logs, you know.

And so survey the risks carefully. That's just part of wisdom. What is the Home Depot ad? Measure twice, cut once. Measure twice, cut once, so take some time and survey the risks that are involved.

I have a friend who used to be a part of this Bible study who took his life savings and got real excited about investing in a company that was a supplier to Walmart. That was their only customer. Walmart. You know where this story's going, right? He put his life savings into it. It was supposed to be this incredible thing and they were going to be expanding and everything. They lost the account. He lost his life savings, because he didn't survey the risks carefully.

Look at verse 10. "If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed, but skill brings success." The story is told about a young man who went to, he was a lumberjack and he went to a company looking for work.

He said to the foreman. He said, "You have any work for me?" He said, "I don't know. Go fell that tree." And so the young lumberjack went over and he fell that tree with expertise. The foreman said, "You're hired. Start Monday." Monday came and at the end of the day, he was number one. They keep felling charts. At the end of the day, he was number one.

On Thursday morning, the young man went for his morning break. The foreman said, "Come here." He said, "You can pick up your check this afternoon. We're letting you go." He said, what do you mean let me go? I get here before everybody else gets here. I stay longer than everybody else. I rarely take a break. How can that be?"

He said, "Well, we keep these felling charts and you went from first to last from Monday to Wednesday," and he sensed the integrity of the young man. And so he said, "Let me see your ax." And he looked at the ax and he said, "Have you been sharpening your ax?"

He said, "Well, no, I've been too busy to sharpen my ax." So whatever the skills that you need, part of wisdom, you know, if you want to not be a man who makes mistakes, then keep up on the playbook. Learn the new plays. Whatever.

And then zero. That's best I could do for the acrostic. Zero words at the expense of others. Verse 12: "Words from the mouth of the wise are gracious, but fools are consumed by their own lips."

So now this is a real problem today because you see people saying things on social media in particular, where it's so easy to get it out there quickly. But then, of course it's impossible to get it back again. So, just be careful when you're talking about your Bible teacher on social media. Zero words at the expense of others.

Seriously, 20 years ago when I for whatever reason, was doing more and more leadership things around the country, being invited to do leadership things, I know this may be hard to believe, but at one time I had a sharp tongue. I mean, I know that I'm so sincere and gracious and humble. You would never suspect that and never get up in everybody's grill or anything like that. Uh, I'm milquetoast. I'm in ministry now. I have to be that way, right?

So Proverbs 22:11, I decided to make one of my life verses: "He who loves a pure heart and his speeches gracious will have the king for his friend." So I was meeting all these leaders and when I had been in business, I said something at a chamber of commerce meeting one time in front of the whole chamber that was just like, so arrogant and so stupid. And I still smart when I think about that.

And so I wanted to overcome that. And so that verse I saw as a way I could do that. And so I just encourage you the same way. Zero words at the expense of others. Love a pure heart. Let your speech be gracious.

Down to verse 20, kind of parallels. "Do not revile the king even in your thoughts or curse the rich in your bedroom, because a little bird in the sky may carry your words and a bird on the wing may report what you say."

I'll guarantee you everything gets found out. They said, well, especially now we've got video cameras on you in your steam rooms on your cruise ship I understand, that that actually did happen once, anyway.

And then make sure you have the right starting point. I think I'm out of time. So, verses 13 and 14. I won't give you a story here. I'll keep it for another day, but. "At the beginning their words are folly and at the end, they are wicked madness and fools multiply words."

We talked about this a little earlier with regard to folly, but just make sure you have the right starting point. Just make sure that you have the right starting point. God has given us a place to start. He is our starting point. He's given us his Word. The word of God is the starting point.

So let the word of God, let the word of God be the place that you start when you're seeking to make a wise decision. And again, the Big Idea of the day: there are very few things in life that can't wait two weeks.

So don't get all balled up that you've got to be able to figure this thing out today. Whatever it is that's bothering you right now, whatever situation, whatever issue you have, I'll guarantee you in two weeks, it'll be just as bad as it is now. Okay? Let's pray. Let's pray.

Our dearest father, first of all, we come to you. We just thank you for your word. It is the starting point. It is our starting point. You are our starting point and we thank you and we praise you for that. And we do have pray that these ideas about wisdom that you have given us today, that you would just remind us, renew us, work them into our consciousness. And we pray, Lord, we'd be able to apply these. We ask these things, Lord, in precious and your holy name. Amen.