

# Ecclesiastes 10:12-20 “Wisdom in our words”

Chapter 10 warns us to stay away from folly, which is the antithesis of wisdom.

Solomon will now give us a variety of short stories, case studies, maxims, proverbs, comparisons, and exhortations to reveal two entirely different ways to live.

## THE WISE WAY AND THE FOOLISH WAY . . .

As we continue through this chapter may you examine yourself and determine, “Am I living wisely or foolishly?”

Ecclesiastes 10:1 reminds us that *even small things have big consequences*. The conclusion is logical: **Wise people will stay away from folly!** “One ‘whoops’ can erase 50 ‘atta-boys!’”

*Solomon has told us many things about the fool already.*

He is lazy (Eccl. 4:5), ill-tempered (7:9), morally blind (2:14).

**He refuses to take advice (9:17).** His life is not pleasing to God (5:4).

**A FOOL** ... A “fool” in the Biblical sense is not necessarily someone with below-average intelligence. Folly does not always show up on the low end of the IQ scale. Rather, the term refers to someone who lacks the **PROPER FEAR OF GOD** and therefore is prone to go the wrong direction in life. It is the fool who “says in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Psalm 14:1).

**A FOOL** is characterized by impulsive disobedience, self-centered arrogance, and rash disregard for the holiness of God.

**A FOOL** seems to be the only person who does not know that he is a fool!

One author explains Solomon’s words, “For every folly, there is an equal and opposite self-destruction. The addict seeks the calm of the drink or

the thrill of the hit but ends up wasting away. The lusty sinner wants sexual pleasure but by gratifying desire outside the holy bonds of matrimony ends up spiritually and physically unsatisfied. The selfish husband or wife wants to have things his or her own way but in trying to get it ruins the relationship and loses everything. The angry father or mother wants more control, but angry emotions set everyone on edge, which only leads to more chaos, more anger, and ultimately less control. These are some of the pitfalls of folly. Dig the pit, and you will fall in. Break down the wall, and the snake of sin will come back to bite you.”

**SOLOMON WISELY STATES,** “For conciliation pacifies great offenses.” Blessed are the peacemakers... **Proverbs 15:1** A soft answer **turns away wrath**, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

The best response to anger is to stay, not to run away, and to remain calm, not to get angry. Getting angry would only make things worse.

More than anything else, what makes a fool a fool is not listening to Jesus and not doing what He says. The fool hears the words of Jesus but does not put them into practice... The wise man hears and does what Jesus says... The fool thus has build his house on the sand and when the storms of life come the house falls... on the other hand the wise man built his house on the rock... doing what Jesus says and when the storms of life come the house stands... **The world and the Devil can huff and puff all they want but they cant blow your house down!** **PRAY**

**Humility...** recognition of who we are and who God is. Recognition of our desperate need for God’s wisdom and not our own...

**Charles Spurgeon wisely said, “The doorstep of the temple of wisdom is the knowledge of our own ignorance.” Humility! As Hughes points out... “We are not as wise as we think we are. If we are honest with ourselves and**

**humble before God, we have to confess that we are not always wise in what we say, **what we do with our money, or how we respond to temptation.** We are prone to make foolish comments, unwise expenditures, and foolhardy decisions. If we want to get any wiser, we need to start by admitting our folly. Only then will we be ready to grow in the wisdom of God.”**

**Ecclesiastes 10:12** The words of a wise man’s mouth *are* gracious,

The wise person speaks wisdom. The word “gracious” is really the Hebrew word for “grace” (chen), favor that is undeserved. A wise person’s words show this kind of grace to other people – **they are messages of blessing.** The point of the verse, then, is not that wise speech **will get us something from other people** but that they will enable us to give something to other people (namely, the gracious love of God):

**The words of a wise man’s mouth *are* gracious,**

**Ephesians 4:29** Let **no** corrupt **word** proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may **impart grace** to the hearers.

**Wisdom chooses each word wisely.**

## **WISDOM IN OUR WORDS**

A wise person speaks and sings praise and thanksgiving to God – **not cursing him but blessing him. When we do this God doesn’t become greater... He is already the grandiose greatious most awesomest He can be... but as we speak and sing of His greatest He becomes greater to us.** **Worship** is **WISDOM IN OUR**

## **WORDS**

When a wise person speaks to other people, he or she uses words of encouragement, words that build up and don’t tear down. Usually the way to bring out the best in other people is not by finding fault but by building them up. **Encouragement** is

## **WISDOM IN OUR WORDS**

A wise person speaks ‘The truth with his neighbor’ (Ephesians 4:25). This includes speaking out against injustice and confronting someone who is doing the wrong thing. The wise person uses wise words to speak hard truths when they need to be spoken – what the Bible calls “a word in season” (Proverbs 15:23) **Exhortation and rebuke** both are **WISDOM IN OUR WORDS**

A wise person speaks with gentleness, never in unrighteous anger. Wisdom waits until emotions are under better control. Then whatever words we speak can offer genuine grace. According to Proverbs 15:28 “The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things”. **Gentleness** is **WISDOM IN OUR WORDS**

A wise person also knows how to say “I’m sorry” and “Please forgive me.” Nor does a wise person lash out with cruel or cutting remarks, even when provoked, knowing that it is the “soft answer” that “turns away wrath” (Proverbs 15:1). **Displaying humility** is **WISDOM IN OUR WORDS**

Again verse 12... The words of a wise man’s mouth *are* gracious, **on the contrary Solomon preaches**, the lips of a fool shall swallow him up; **13** The words of his mouth begin with foolishness, And the end of his talk *is* raving madness.

**Solomon already said in Chapter 5 verse 6.** Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, **The powerful tongue!**

James speaking to the POWER of the tongue massages our imaginations with analogies like **Horses** being directed by small bridles... little **rudders** steering large ships... small **sparks** setting forests on fire, he **graphically** states that the tongue is, **“set on fire by hell”... Present participle meaning Continually set on fire by hell...**

**+** Jesus used this same word for hell in Mark 9 verse 48, **“Gehenna”... ‘Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’**

A place of fire and filth and “*Gehenna*” is derived from the forever burning garbage dump outside of Jerusalem... The often times nasty and ugly tongue. **Think twice before you speak once!** When your mind goes blank be sure to turn off the sound!

**Proverbs 18:21** The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Paul Tripp offers wise counsel in his book *War of Words*, a practical guide to knowing the difference between wise and foolish speech. Here is Dr. Tripp’s list of questions for self-examination:

**L**isten to the talk that goes on in your home. **How much of it is impatient and unkind?** How often are words spoken out of selfishness and personal desire? How easily do outbursts of anger occur? How often do we bring up past wrongs? How do we fail to communicate hope? How do we fail to protect? How often do our words carry threats that we have “*had it*” and are about to quit? Stop and listen, and you will see how much we need to hold our talk to this standard of love, and how often the truth we profess to speak has been distorted by our sin.

**Speak when you are angry, and you’ll deliver the best speech you’ll ever regret.**

**Remember God gave you two ears and one mouth for a reason.**

**Think twice before you speak once!**

**It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open ones mouth and remove all doubt**

**When your mind goes blank, remember to turn off the sound**

The training of **whales**... what an awesome thing... Jumping rope... launching human beings into the air... Crazy awesome!

**Lions** submitting to the ring master as he places his head in the lion’s mouth!

**Eagles** swooping down and capturing prey and laying it at their trainer’s feet

A **Cobra** gently kissing a woman on the lips...

**James chapter 3 verse 7...** For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, **is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.** <sup>8</sup> But no man can tame the tongue. *It is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup> With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude (likeness) of God. <sup>10</sup> Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Gossip, slander so sad! The universal abuse of our tongues is being addressed by Solomon in regards to broken vows and unkept promises.

The words of a wise man's mouth *are* gracious, But the lips of a fool shall swallow him up; **13** The words of his mouth begin with foolishness, And the end of his talk *is* raving madness.

**Slander** -An utterance of false statements harmful to another's character or reputation

**Proverbs 20:19 He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets,  
Therefore do not associate with a gossip. .**

*Young man middle ages went to monk.* "I've sinned by telling slanderous statements about someone. What shall I do now? Put feather on every doorstep in town. He did and came back. **now what?** go back and pick them all up. Impossible they have all been blown away by the wind "so has your slanderous word become impossible to retrieve".

**Psalm 101:5** Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, Him I will destroy; The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, Him I will not endure.

**Gossip** - a person who chatters or repeats idle talk and rumors about others

**Doesn't have to be a lie to be gossip...** Before you repeat a story, ask yourself: **Is it true? Is it harmless? Is it necessary? Am I part of the problem or solution? If not, don't repeat it!!!**

How we mask gossip by justifying it with phrases like, **“Have you heard?”** ... **“Did you know?”** ... **“They tell me”**... **“Keep this to yourself”**... or **“I don’t believe it’s true but I heard that..”** **“I wouldn’t tell you but I know it won’t go any further”**


or as the CHRISTIAN will say... **“I am telling you this so you can pray”**

We must learn to turn a deaf ear to such gossip and slander

**Proverbs 18:21** The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

**Proverbs 12:18** Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.


**Proverbs 15:4** The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit

 **Solomon goes on to say in verse 14** A fool also multiplies words. **Talk little and work much, is a rabbinical adage...** **The righteous speak little, and do much; the wicked speak much, and do nothing.**

*Two ears are given to us, the rabbis observe, but only one tongue: the ears are open and exposed, whereas the tongue is walled in behind the teeth.*

**Proverbs 10:19** In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.

**Proverbs 13:3** He who guards his mouth preserves his life, But he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.

 **Plato once said,** “Wise men speak because they have something to say; fools because they have to say something.”

***I’ve never regretted something I didn’t say!***

★ According to one statistician, the average person spends at least **13 years** of his life talking. On a normal day something like **18,000 words** (average woman 30,000) are likely to be used, roughly equivalent to a book of **54 pages**. **In one year his words would fill 66 books**, each containing 800 pages. **How does your book read?**

Just as the Bible speaks more about hell than heaven because God doesn't want anyone to go there... Solomon spends more time talking about the lips of a fool than about the mouth of a wise man, presumably because speech is such a difficult area of sanctification for most of us.

Jesus says in "Matthew 12:34 it is "out of the abundance of the heart" that "the mouth speaks"... **that's why we need new hearts everyday!**

Solomon finishes verse 14... No man knows what is to be; Who can tell him what will be after him? **Proverbs 27:1** Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth. Dependence upon God for everything! Even tomorrow.

15 The labor of fools wears them,

Ryden makes this note: a lazy fool gets worn out by his work – not because he is working hard, but because he is fooling around when he ought to be working. This is an important insight for someone who quickly gets tired of working but never has very much to show for his (or her) work. Merely playing at work wears the soul, because deep down we know that we ought to be more productive. The feelings of guilt that we have as a result are exhausting (especially when we realize that we still have a lot of work to do that we should have done already). The wise man get energized by working hard; his service for the Lord satisfies his soul. But the fool is exhausted. He may try to convince himself (or others) that he is working hard, when in fact he is wearing himself out by hardly working at all.

For they do not even know how to go to the city!



Solomon makes a funny... The fool boasts about his future plans and wearies people with his talk, but he can't even find the way to the city. In Bible times, the roads to the cities were well-marked so that any traveler could find his way, but the fool is so busy talking about the future that he loses his way in the present; **"He's so dumb, he couldn't learn the route to run an elevator."**  
**The fool can't find his way out of a paper bag.**

16 Woe to you, O land, when your king *is* a child, And your princes feast in the morning!

**CHILD:** The word "child" may indicate that the ruler is a youngster, like a boy king.

It also could refer to an "older, immature" ruler. In the political context it is written it may refer to a King lacking experience and wisdom.

**Real leaders use their authority to build the nation, while mere officeholders use the nation to build their authority.**

Solomon's son Rehoboam was a child in this sense. Although he was **41** when he began to reign (2 Chronicles 12:13), Rehoboam had no idea what he was doing. His court was corrupt, his judgments were unsound, and soon his kingdom was divided.

A notable example from European history is Charles the 12th, who became the king of Sweden when he was only a teenage. The wild behavior of Charles and his friends included riding on horseback through his grandmother's apartment, knocking people to the ground in the city streets, and practicing firearms by shooting out the windows of the palace. In response, the leading preachers of Stockholm all agreed to preach from Ecclesiastes 10:16 on the same Sunday, pronouncing woe on a land with a child for a king and princes that feasted in the morning.

**Solomon brings "BALANCE" to celebration**... verse 17 Blessed *are* you, O land, when your king *is* the son of nobles, And your princes feast at the **proper time**—For strength and not for drunkenness!

18 Because of laziness the building decays, And through idleness of

hands the house leaks.

**Some maintenance is always required.** Neglect regular upkeep of the roof, and soon every rainstorm will be another opportunity to unfold an umbrella! The Preacher imagines a fool who is so lazy that his whole house will collapse before he climbs up the ladder to patch his crumbling roof.

**One commentator adds,** “This image of fatal decay helps us see that sloth is a deadly sin. It will destroy the soul that is too lazy to seek its own spiritual progress. But that is not the only things that sloth will destroy. It will destroy a relationship when people turn to their own interest rather than working hard at intimacy. It will destroy a church that rests on what it has already accomplished rather than doing everything it still has an opportunity to do for Christ.”

19 A feast is made for laughter, And wine makes merry; But money answers everything. **Courson adds,** “**These are the words of a fool. How do you know if you’re a fool? Is drinking important to you? Is partying a priority for you? Is money the real key to life in your perspective? If so, congratulations. YOU ARE A BONA FIDE FOOL.**”

20 Do not curse the king, even in your thought; Do not curse the rich, even in your bedroom; **Goes back to gossip and slander... don’t say behind someone’s back what you would never say to their face and don’t say to someone’s face what you would never say behind their back. Even if we can’t respect the person in the office, we must respect the office** (Rom 13:1–7; 1 Pet 2:13–17).

For a bird of the air may carry your voice, **“A little bird told me, believed to have originated from this verse.** And a bird in flight may tell the matter. You see, the “bird” of which Solomon writes is the bird of reality. Whenever you speak about someone else, count on your words getting back to them.

**In this section, we have seen a foolish person accurately described by Solomon as one with too many words, too little sense, TOO EARLY PARTYING,**

and too late getting to work.

Solomon in his search for the meaning of life “under the sun”... **without God**, without eternity in mind continues to roll snake eyes... **Chasing bubbles... meaningless... vanity!!!** When God is inserted into the picture Solomon concludes that life does have meaning and **EVERYTHING MATTERS.**

Yes death is unavoidable (9:1-10) Yes, life is unpredictable (9:11-18). Yes, we must avoid folly (chapter 10) and live by the wisdom of God.

Solomon concludes the best thing we can do is to **trust God**, do our work, accept what God sends us, and enjoy each day of our lives to the glory of God (3:12-15, 22; 5:18-20; 8:15; 9:7-10).

Keep your eyes on Jesus and you will know He is with you when you get out of the boat... Keep your eyes on Jesus and you will know He is with you in the fire... Keep your eyes on Jesus and you will know that He will never leave you or forsake you... Keep your eyes on Jesus and you will know that ISIS is not in charge, Jesus is... Keep your eyes on Jesus and you will know His peace in the middle of the storm...

**He loves you! He loves you! He loves you! This is amazing Grace!!!**