

Today we're wrapping up our series on Walking Wisely. We've used this command given to us by the Apostle Paul as our key text for the whole series.

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*15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as **unwise** but as **wise**, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.*

Ephesians 5:15-17

Over the last 4 weeks we've looked at how God designed us to live and walk by wisdom. He speaks to us about wisdom all throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. In week 2 we talked about the best question ever to help us apply this command that we need to ask ourselves in every decision, opportunity, or invitation that comes our way. And that question is: ***What is the wise thing to do?*** And we added a few clarifying statements to it to help make things clearer and those were:

SLIDE

In light of my past experiences, my current circumstances, and my future hopes and dreams; what is the wise thing to do?

Then last week we said, if you start asking yourself this question and start pushing back against the answer you're getting, you've learned something about yourself: ***You don't have your best interest at heart.*** And we said you needed to know that because any time that you opt out of doing the wise thing, you're opting even by accident into one of 3 other options. You're living as The Simple, The Fool, or The Mocker. You're either being naive when it comes to wisdom as the Simple and you don't even know sometimes what the wise thing to do is. Or you're being complacent when it comes to wisdom as the Fool saying, "I know what the wise thing to do is, I just don't care." Or you're being adversarial to wisdom as the Mocker and it's not enough that you aren't choosing the wise thing to do, you have to belittle and insult and mock anyone who dares to choose the path of wisdom.

And the danger we said comes from if you decide to sit in any one of those seats for too long, when you need wisdom for your marriage that's struggling, or to make a financial decision, or to help restore a relationship with your child, or to break the hold of an addiction, you won't even be able to recognize wise advice if it's given to you. So, the remedy is to humble yourself wherever you are right now, admit you can't do it on your own, repent or turn away from your foolish ways, and invite God and Godly people into your life to share wisdom and to help you.

If there's any of those that you missed, or you want to share with friends or family, or you want to go back and watch again, they're all on our website. And I tend to manuscript my notes, so Rachel Samsel, our office administrator, who does more than could ever be described to help the church function. Including helping prepare this message by talking through this with Ben and I as I was developing the structure. She's included those manuscripts for each week as a pdf if you want to grab those as well.

But today we're going to be talking about what to do when you've actually got a decision to make. And many of us in the room who've lived long enough can tell you a story of our greatest regret tied to a decision we've made when we have chosen the unwise thing to do. Whether we were naive, foolish and careless, or downright opposed to walking in wisdom. Our greatest regrets come from decisions where we chose not to opt for wisdom.

And looking back at those decisions we've asked ourselves "What was I thinking? How did I miss it? It was so obvious. I should've seen that coming a mile away!"

- I knew he or she wasn't right for me.
- I knew that deal seemed too good to be true.
- I knew what happens there on Spring Break.
- I knew we didn't have that to spend, but I just had to have "it" whatever "it" was.
- I knew I needed to study for that final.
- I knew that I needed to eat better and take care of myself.
- I knew that something seemed off about that company, or taking that job.
- I knew it was more than just innocent conversations on social media.
- I knew I didn't need to overreact or underreact as a parent.

You look back and see that it's so obvious now, but in the moment you couldn't see because your emotions got in the way of making a wise decision.

Isn't it funny that you know exactly what your friend should do in their situation but you can't figure out for the life of you what to do with yours. You know exactly what your neighbors need to do with their kids but you're clueless what to do with yours. If someone put you in charge of managing their money you'd know exactly what to do. You'd be able to walk away from impulse buys. You wouldn't be spending frivolously on things that you want but don't need. But it's hard to keep control of your own finances.

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Emotionally charged environments are not ideal for decision making

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Our emotions make the obvious **less** obvious.

If you look back and say, “I should’ve seen it coming!” Then people around you should’ve seen it coming as well. And if so you’re thinking, “Well, they should’ve said something!” Maybe they did but either you **didn’t listen** or nobody warned you because they knew you **wouldn’t listen**. There were all sorts of conversations happening when you weren’t around by the people who love you and care about you the most and they’re saying, “‘You say something.’ ‘No, you.’ ‘No, I tried the last time we were together and they bit my head off.’ ‘Well, I tried and they cut me off mid sentence, they wouldn’t even listen to me. All they said was “Yeah but... Yeah but... Yeah but...””

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Wise people recognize **when** they are in no condition to decide **for** themselves **by** themselves.

I’ve been sharing a little without going into too much detail about a situation that we’re walking through as parents, and again I cannot thank you enough for all the prayers and wisdom that has been shared with us over the past couple of weeks. But I knew immediately when we ran into this that it was by no means an emotionally neutral situation. If you’ve spent any time with me at all, you know that I’m passionate about worshipping Jesus, I love Hannah more than words could ever express, and I love my children like crazy. So, this is not to say that we handled this whole situation correctly and did the exact right thing. But I knew this principle so, we started begging for wisdom and insight because we had done all we knew to do and it still wasn’t resolved. And we recognized quickly we were in no condition to try and figure it all out by ourselves.

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What’s the wise thing to do when your emotions are high and appetites are inflamed?

The answer comes straight from Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived outside of Jesus himself. If you're not familiar with the story of Solomon, he was the 3rd King of Israel, the son of King David. In the Scriptures David was called "a man after God's own heart". Because he loved God so deeply and was committed to following in His ways, God poured out His love and wisdom not only on David but his son, Solomon, as well. In 1 Kings 3 and 2 Chronicles 1 we have the account of an interaction between God and Solomon one night in a dream shortly after Solomon was anointed king succeeding his father and had given 1,000 sacrifices to God at Gibeon. God came to Solomon in a dream and asked him, **"What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!"** So Solomon as a young man, 19-20 years old, asked for wisdom to lead God's people Israel.

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*10 The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for wisdom. 11 So God replied, "Because you have asked for wisdom in governing my people with justice and have not asked for a long life or wealth or the death of your enemies— 12 **I will give you what you asked for! I will give you a wise and understanding heart such as no one else has had or ever will have!** 13 And I will also give you what you did not ask for—riches and fame! No other king in all the world will be compared to you for the rest of your life! 14 And if you follow me and obey my decrees and my commands as your father, David, did, I will give you a long life."*

1 Kings 3:10-14

Solomon got wisdom directly from God Himself and he never needed to ask for counsel or insight from anyone. I only included 15 references but I could have included so many more just in the book of Proverbs. It's hard to search exactly because he says it in all sorts of different ways. **But If there's one theme you hear repeated over and over and over throughout the book of Proverbs it's to seek counsel, invite others in, to recognize **when** we are in no condition to decide **for** ourselves **by** ourselves because our emotions are high and our appetites are inflamed.**

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What's the wise thing to do when your emotions are high and appetites are inflamed?

LISTEN

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*Instruct the wise and they will be **wiser still**...*

Proverbs 9:9

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*A **wise** person will **hear** and increase in learning, And a person of understanding will **acquire wise counsel**.*

Proverbs 1:5

SLIDE

*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a person who **listens** to advice is wise.*

Proverbs 12:15

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*Plans fail for lack of **counsel**, but with **many advisers** they succeed.*

Proverbs 15:22

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*Listen to advice and accept **discipline**,*

*and at the **end** you will be counted among the **wise**.*

Proverbs 19:20

SLIDE

*Where there is strife, there is **pride**,*

*but wisdom is found in those who **take advice**.*

Proverbs 13:10

Here's the tragic thing. If you've never read the whole story of Solomon's life I'll give you the cliff's note version. He started off so well, at 19 or 20 he was anointed king and out of love for his father, David, God came to Solomon and said, "Ask anything, and I'll give it to you." And Solomon asked for wisdom, and in **SLIDE 1 Kings 4:29 God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore**. If you keep reading it says that people traveled from all over the world to come to Solomon and get his advice. There wasn't a single subject that he couldn't converse expertly about. They didn't have global summits to get the leaders in a room to figure out the world's issues, they just sent envoys to Solomon because he always knew the wise thing to do.

And because of his great wisdom he had more wealth than any other king had before or since. Go read 1 Kings 10 to see the full description. But the Bible said that he had so much wealth that everything he used from his cups and utensils, his throne, the shields he had lining his walls were all solid gold or overlaid with gold to the point that silver was considered worthless when he was ruling. He made Israel the leading nation in wealth and military strength, they were the world superpower of their day.

But eventually, even though he wrote thousands of Proverbs and Psalms and repeated over and over and over **the significance, the gravity, the urgency of listening to wise counsel.** “No matter how wise you are, you’re never wise enough. No matter how wise you are, you always need to listen to counsel. No matter how smart you are, you need to invite people into your life to give you insight especially in the areas of finances and relationships because they’re not emotionally neutral.” But at the end of his life, he ignored his own advice and started to believe that he was so wise he didn’t need any insight or counsel from anyone. And everything started falling apart. At the end of his life, he had been so foolish that the kingdom would be torn apart. The people would fall into idolatry and everything that he built would be destroyed and carried away. His story could be summed up by saying: **The wisest man who ever lived made some of the most foolish decisions ever made.**

And it was because he ignored the very principle of listening to wise counsel he spoke about over and over and over again. So, I’m asking you and I’m asking me why would we do the same thing? And there’s any number of reasons but we’re just going to look at 2.

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We already **know** what the wise people are going to say and we don’t want to **hear** it.

If you’ve already started asking the question, “**In light of my past experiences, my current circumstances, and my future hopes and dreams: what is the wise thing to do?**” You probably in a lot of cases know or at least have a decent idea of what you need to do. And the reason you don’t want to invite anyone in to talk about it, is because you’ve also got a pretty good idea of what they’re going to say. Because it’s what you know to be true anyways. You just don’t want to hear it. And so you either start cutting off relationships and the voices that oppose what you want to do or you just wait for them to stop talking so that you can go do what you want to anyways. It creates tension and strife and Proverbs 13:10 tells us where that comes from: **Pride.** “*Where there is strife, there is **pride**...*”

And that should terrify us because **James 4:6** quoting from **Proverbs 3:34** says, “**God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.**” I don’t know about you, but I don’t want to do anything that sets me in opposition to the God of the Universe. I want as much grace from Him as I can get because I need it so desperately. But any time you start cutting yourself off from wise counsel, pride, which is definitely not in your best interest, is at the root.

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We don't think it's anyone else's **business**.

They just don't know him like I do.

They just don't know how hard I've worked and that I deserve this.

They just don't know my kids.

They say they love me, but if they did, they'd just get on board.

Besides, it's not their business anyways.

I'm an adult. I'm the boss. I'm the mom or the dad. It's my life. I can handle it. I know what I really want or need. They need to respect my privacy and just go on their happy little way.

But here's the thing we're not thinking about when our emotions are high and our appetites are inflamed:

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Private decisions have **public** consequences.

Private decisions never stay private. Personal decisions don't just affect your person especially if you're married, especially if you're a parent, or serve as a leader. Every scandal or embarrassing story that has come out in the news started somewhere in private. And what seemed like it was just my business, my life, my choices and doesn't affect anyone else eventually comes out and it starts affecting more than just me. Especially when you're making foolish decisions. And any time you cut yourself off from wise counsel the Bible tells us, you're behaving like a fool. You're abandoning the path that God designed you to walk, the pathway of wisdom. You are setting yourself up for pain, heartache, disappointment, and regret. You are leaning into pride and setting yourself up to be opposed by God Himself, which is a terrifying prospect.

So, what do we do? How can we set ourselves up to listen to wise counsel especially when emotions are high and appetites are inflamed? What are some steps we can take to stay on the pathway of wisdom? How can we be sure we are listening to **WISE** counsel and setting ourselves up for the life that God has for us?

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Simple Steps to Smarter Choices

1. **Devour** the Word of God (Matthew 4:4, Deuteronomy 8:3, Isaiah 30:21, Psalms 1:1-3, Proverbs 1:1-7)

God is the source of all wisdom and the primary way that He speaks to us today is through His word. And Jesus demonstrated exactly how to respond with wisdom when our appetites are inflamed and temptation is right in front of us. Right at the beginning of His public ministry, immediately after He had been baptized and God spoke audibly from heaven saying, ***“This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.”*** Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to fast for 40 days and nights and he faced temptation straight from the Enemy himself. Jesus was beyond hungry and the first thing that Satan tempted Him with was to meet a legitimate need to eat in an illegitimate way by turning the stones into bread. And that’s one of the enemy’s favorite tactics to tempt us to say, ***“God, I don’t trust You to meet my needs, so I’m going to go meet them in whatever way I see fit.”***

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[Jesus] answered, “It is written: ***Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.***” ***Matthew 4:4***

His Word is life to us. We weren’t meant to just survive on physical food, we have to devour the Word of God. When we come to a point of decision, specifically the really important ones, we don’t need to play the game of flipping through the Bible, put our finger down and see if that helps us. Because sometimes you do land on a scripture that seems helpful. You put your name down on one that mentions John the Baptist eating honey and locusts and you say, “He ordered honey in his tea the first time I bumped into him at Rembrandt’s! And He had a cousin named John. That must mean he’s the one!” But other times you land on one that says, “then the birds came and plucked the flesh off of his skull.” And you’re thinking, “That might not be the best job for me to take after all.”

The point is to fill your heart, your mind, and your soul with the Scriptures so much, that you know God’s voice. It’s like talking with a friend and you say, “Yeah, I knew at that moment exactly what you would’ve said.” Because you’ve spent so much time together you know how they’d respond. You can almost hear their voice. And that’s what God wants for us as well. To spend time daily in His word. To hear him speak of the path of wisdom. To read the stories of those that did it well, and also those who didn’t. To fill your heart with His words of life. So that you can hear His voice loud and clear over your emotions or appetites.

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2. **Honor Family** (Ephesians 6:1-3, Exodus 20:12, Proverbs 1:8, 6:20-23, 23:22-25)

We talked about this in the Family in Focus series but God designed the family first for the husband and wife to mirror the relationship between Christ and the church. And then he established the authority structure of the family as his main avenue for provision, protection, nurturing, and structure to the children. Also this is where each of us learns to listen and obey the voices of our parents in preparation for when God speaks to us when we're older. We've learned to listen and obey what He tells us to do because we've had years of practicing it with our parents.

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1 Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. 2 "Honor your father and mother." This is the first commandment with a promise: 3 If you honor your father and mother, "things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth."

Ephesians 6:1-3

Now, I'm no longer directly under the authority of my parents because I have a home and family of my own. But I still turn to my mom and I turned to my dad before he passed away for wisdom and insight because they have years of experience that I don't. They may have stories of how they got it right or wrong and I can learn from them. They're able to see the situation without the emotions that I have and can give me sound wisdom that's objective. And I have a lot of sisters, A LOT of sisters that I share things with as well and seek their input and wisdom on things that we're working through because they love me and they have nothing to gain other than they want to see us make wise choices. Your family is there to help you be wise. Invite them in.

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3. **Listen to** Spiritual Leaders (Hebrews 13:17, Proverbs 19:20-21)

God has brought each of your pastors here for one goal, to love you well and equip each of you saints to do the work of the ministry. We pray for you, we weep with you in sorrow and joy, only your momma thinks about you more than we do. Because we want to do everything in our power to help you walk the path of wisdom in every area of your life. We don't take our calling lightly and we know we have to answer to God for how we lead you, HIS church, HIS bride.

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*7 Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. **Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God.** Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.*

Hebrews 13:17

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4. **Trust** Community (Proverbs 12:26, 17:17, 27:6,9,17)

It is not by accident that God has brought you here to Stuart Heights Baptist Church. He has brought you here to grow your faith, embolden your worship, expand your knowledge and understanding of Him, and to surround you with community, a family of believers to help you walk through life wisely. We talked about the importance of community last fall in our *All In* series. I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for each of us to live in community, to share life together. We were made in the image of God who has lived in perfect community in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for all eternity. And as such we weren't made to live isolated lives. We weren't made to just come in on a Sunday, check the attendance box, and go home. We were made to spend time together in Sunday School, in groups at homes around the dinner table, or out doing an activity we enjoy together. We were meant to surround ourselves with Godly people so that when we're at a point of decision we've built enough of a relationship to invite them to speak into our lives.

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The godly give good advice to their friends...

Proverbs 12:26

I can't tell you how many times I've invited friends into our lives to give us insight and wisdom into what we're facing at the moment and we don't know what the wise thing to do is. I have numbers in my phone that the moment a crisis hits, they're the ones we call and no matter the time, place, or situation they're there. Each of us needs that desperately. Especially to give us an objective perspective when our emotions are high and our appetites are inflamed.

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5. **Take** the Step (Psalm 37:3-5, Proverbs 3:1-6 4:10-13, 25-27)

If you're at a point of decision, and you've been filling your life with Scripture to internalize the principles of wisdom. You've talked with your family and invited them to speak into your situation. You've reached out to the Spiritual leaders God has placed in your lives or just started applying the messages that we've shared with you each week. You've taken off the mask that says, "Everything's fine. I've got this," with some close members of your church community and invited them into your life to share wisdom, to give you insight and good advice.

Everyone that has spoken to you and either seems in agreement or on the same page in support. Then comes the last piece and that's to take the step.

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Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Psalms 37:4

Once God is your delight, once He is who you want to pursue more than anything else. Once you've filled your heart with His Word and followed the path of wisdom by inviting wise counsel, then *He will give you the desires of your heart*. And the thing is, once he's your delight, His desires become your desires. What he wants most for your life is what you want most. You want to walk the path of wisdom more than anything else because He is your joy, your contentment, your peace, your hope, your life, your Savior, your Lord. And you want to live a life that pleases Him more than you want anything else.

I remember very clearly the times where I didn't walk this pathway of wisdom. Where I didn't use these simple steps to smarter choices. Where I didn't invite wise counsel into my life. **Each instance is tied to my greatest regrets.** The things I'd give anything to go back and change. The things that I look back on and hate that I wasted that time, those opportunities, the hurts and the pain that I caused myself and those around me. But I am so thankful that someone shared this with me. And more than anything I wanted to share it with you, because as your pastor I want the very best for you. I want you to be in a place to receive all that God has for you. I want you to walk the path of wisdom and apply it to every area of your life.

Now, this is our grid that every big and small decision of our lives goes through. Now this is the pathway that we as a family try to walk however imperfectly because none of us can ever get this right every single time. And I don't want anyone to have the false assumption that we do this perfectly in every situation. But, even when we stray for a moment, we come back quickly because we want the abundant life that Christ purchased for us. We want peace and joy in our home and lives. We want to live a life as free as possible from shame and regret. We want to walk wisely. And it's available to each of us today. You just have to ask for it.