

Today we're jumping into part 3 of our 4 week series Walking Wisely. And our key passage for this whole series comes from Ephesians 5:15-17.

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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

Last week we took our time together to unpack this verse and then we added a question not explicitly in the text, but one that if we start asking will put us on the path to live out the command that the Apostle Paul is giving us. "***Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise...***" Last week we explained there's only two options for how you can live, either God's way, by wisdom. How everything in the universe was designed to function. Or we could do it our way, culture's way, we could live foolishly. And we added a question to help us figure out with sometimes disturbing clarity what the wise thing to do is. Do y'all remember it?

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

And I gave you a little bit of homework this past week, to start asking this question of every decision, opportunity, or invitation you received throughout the week. And I said, you don't have to start actually doing the wise thing yet, but just start the habit of asking what the wise thing to do is. And we also said, if you feel yourself start to push back against the answer you're getting, you've learned something. If you feel the excuses start coming up, "Yes, I know that's the wise thing to do, but I can handle it..." But they just don't understand... Sure, that happened to them but it won't happen to me..." If you feel yourself trying to talk yourself into any option other than the wise thing to do. Know that that's an indicator: ***you don't have your best interest at heart.*** That's an indicator that you are starting to try and lie to yourself and choose foolishly.

And you need to be honest about it, because in verse 17 the Apostle Paul tells us, "***do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.***" Face up to, acknowledge, admit what you know to be wise. In most cases it's more obvious than we make it out to be. And if you're a Christian who has surrounded themselves with other Jesus followers who are committed to walking wisely, they more than likely have been saying what you know to be true as well.

Scripture tells us there's only two ways to live, either wisely, living according to the design, structure, and instructions that the LORD gives us through his Word. Or unwisely, according to our own desires, according to whatever structure we decide, and according to whatever seems right in our own eyes at the time regardless of the input of anyone else. In our postmodern age where truth is relative and everyone is just seeking "my truth" instead of objective truth, it can be especially hard to push back against the culture to live our lives wisely.

If you want to see just how far it can go when people rebel against any objective source of truth and live however they want to, go read the book of Judges this week. Twice in Judges 17:6 and 21:25, the very last verse in the book of Judges, it says, ***"In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes."*** The last 3 chapters are especially horrific, but God wanted us to see what happens when we abandon truth, abandon the path of wisdom, and embrace the lies and foolishness of living and doing whatever is right in our own eyes.

And while the Bible isn't filled with explicit directions for every single scenario that we'll encounter in life, because it was written for all peoples, in all cultures, throughout all time. It is very clear on who is the source of wisdom, our Heavenly Father. How to walk the pathway of wisdom. And it gives us clear principles to apply to whatever situation we might encounter. And in the book of Proverbs, a book written by King Solomon, the wisest man to ever live outside of Jesus, he contrasts living wisely with 3 types of people who live unwisely. ***Because he wanted us to see clearly the benefits of, the safety that comes from, the blessings and peace that come from walking wisely. And also the cost of, the danger that comes from, the heartache and regret that comes from walking unwisely.*** Today we're going to be looking at these 3 groups and I want you to be asking yourself. If you're not opting for wisdom, which of these 3 options you may have chosen accidentally.

The first of the groups that Solomon speaks to is a group that every single one of us falls into at some point in our lives but very specifically from the ages of about 16-26. That's when the prefrontal cortex or the rational part of your brain is fully developed. It isn't a bad thing, it's just a fact of life because of our age and inexperience at the time. It's typically tied to this time period in our lives, but any of us can fall into this category any time we're walking into a stage of life that we've never experienced before.

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1. **The Simple** (15 references in Proverbs)

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The Simple - Naïve or clueless

Some times when you might fall into the category of Simple

When you're learning to drive a car...

When you're figuring out what you'd like to do to make money...

When you're deciding what to concentrate on to study...

When you start dating (**PS the only time when you should date is when you're ready to find a spouse**)... If I only had one thing I could go back and tell my 16 year old self, this would probably be it. I was not ready at 16 to be married. I didn't gain anything from having relationships where you like each other and you invest your time, your energy, your money, your emotions, you give pieces of your heart away, for what? When I met Hannah, I wasn't glad that I'd spent all that time and energy on any other girl. I was like, "What was I thinking?!? I'd take it all back if I could." Ok, side rant over.

When you get married for the first time (hopefully only time)...

When you buy your first car, first house, start investing...

When you have your first child...

When you're learning that you have to parent each of your children individually according to the stage they're in and their specific personality, there is no cookie cutter way...

When you start that new job...

When you move to a new city...

Solomon knew that any time that we lacked experience we would have the tendency or the opportunity to behave unwisely or as a simple, naive person. So, in the first 4 chapters of Proverbs he starts everything off by saying:

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1 These are the proverbs of Solomon, David's son, king of Israel.

*2 Their purpose is to teach people wisdom and discipline,
to help them understand the insights of the wise.*

*3 Their purpose is to teach people to live disciplined and successful lives,
to help them do what is right, just, and fair.*

**4 These proverbs will give insight to the simple,
knowledge and discernment to the young.**

Proverbs 1:1-4

In your notes, I wanted to give you a reference so that you could have either a physical copy or have it available digitally online to see all the verses throughout Proverbs that speak to the simple.

The largest and best example comes in chapter 7 where Solomon starts off speaking to his son and he tells them a story of a simple young man that he was watching from his window one evening. And we don't have time to go through the whole chapter today, but Solomon can tell he's just young and naive, it says he lacked common sense. Anyone over 30 is going, "Oh yeah, I know that type. I was that type. I have the embarrassing tattoo to remind me every day in the mirror of when I was this guy." This young simple guy gets drawn into a scenario that he thinks is just going to be a good time. Solomon says little did he know, he was being led like an ox to the slaughter, or like a bird to a snare. He was young, he was naive, he didn't think it through and little did he know what appeared to be just a fun night to remember would cost him his life.

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*A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions. The **simpleton** goes blindly on and suffers the consequences. Proverbs 22:3*

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The Simple respond to wisdom:

"Nothing's gonna happen."

"I can handle it."

"You're overreacting."

"Nothing's gonna happen." For some reason, when you're this age, these tend to be some of your go-to phrases that you pull out anytime anyone tries to share wisdom with you that contradicts the desires you have at the moment. Believe me, I've said them all multiple times. Like once, when I was diving off of a bridge to impress a girl I liked and almost got run over by the pontoon boat we were in because I wasn't paying attention. And when I miraculously surfaced unharmed, and climbed back into the boat she was looking the other way and missed the whole thing. Thankfully in that instance nothing did happen, but there were so many things that could've gone wrong. In fact, I have no clue how they didn't except for the grace of God.

"I can handle it." Really? Because I had a hard time handling it at your age, and your older brother or your sister didn't handle it well. **"You're overreacting."** Normally accompanied by an eyeroll. The reason why parents tend to "overreact" to things is because we're old enough to have either experienced serious consequences for ourselves or had a front row seat to watch someone close to us experience them. It's not your fault that you haven't, you're not old enough to have had as much time or experience.

Thankfully you've never had to face consequences like:

- You've never been so in debt, you weren't sure you could make your house payment, or pay your rent, or make your car payment. You're not afraid of debt the way that you should be because you've not experienced the crushing weight of it and seen how it can seriously alter your life and not for the good.
- You've never been addicted to anything.
- You've never had your heart so broken, you weren't sure you'd be able to trust another guy or a girl again.
- You've never faced the consequences of misusing your sexuality to the point where you're afraid you might never experience true intimacy ever again.

And that's the point! We who are slightly older than you, who love you and want the best for you don't want you to have to experience any of that! Again, this applies mainly to that group that falls into that age group, but it is just as applicable to any time you find yourself in a situation you've never navigated before.

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Don't trade what you want **most** for what you want in the **moment**.

This is where asking, "**In light of my future hopes and dreams, what is the wise thing to do?**" comes into play. Here's something so amazing, and I don't want you to miss it! You can have the benefits of youth and the benefits of wisdom at the same time. You can be young with less responsibility, less bills to pay, less aches and pains, where your whole life is still ahead of you AND have wisdom at the same time!! But you have to SEEK wisdom, it will not come naturally. You have to ask, "**In light of my past experiences, my current circumstances, and my future hopes and dreams, what is the wise thing to do?**" And then you have to follow the advice of those around you who love you, who have your best interests at heart, and who want to share wisdom with you.

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Remedy - Time

The remedy for the simple is time. With enough time and doing things the hard way and enough bumps and bruises and scars, you can gain the wisdom you need to not live unwisely. But why would you want to live like that? Invite other Godly people into your life who are a little further ahead of you in whatever situation you're working through and ask them, "What is the wise thing to do?" Listen and then do it!

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2. The Fool (71-85 references in Proverbs, 175 throughout the Scriptures)

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The Fool - Knows but doesn't care

There are more references to the fool in the Proverbs than any of the other 3 categories. And I took the time to put those references together for you so that: A) you have those references if/when you need them B) So, you can see the overwhelming attention given throughout Proverbs speaking to the fool. And the reason behind that is, at some point with enough time and hard life lessons you can grow out of being simple. And not many people fall into the last category we're going to look at. **But every single one of us is susceptible at any time to behaving foolishly whenever we close our eyes, ears, and hearts to wisdom. Any time we choose to turn from wisdom, the only place that we can turn to is foolishness. Solomon is constantly contrasting the way of wisdom from the way of foolishness. Because living foolishly is living in direct conflict with the way of living God has called us to and we have to consistently, daily choose which path we will follow.**

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*Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true knowledge, but **fools despise wisdom and discipline.***

Proverbs 1:7

*Wise people think before they act; **fools don't—and even brag about their foolishness.***

Proverbs 13:16

*It is pleasant to see dreams come true, but **fools refuse to turn from evil to attain them.***

Proverbs 13:19

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The Fool responds to wisdom:

"I know, I just don't care."

"I don't give a ..."

"I'm gonna do what I want."

Whenever a fool encounters someone trying to speak wisdom into their life they typically respond with. **"I know, I just don't care."**

You know that you could be fired for that... I know, I just don't care.

You know that the doctor said you should or shouldn't... I know I just don't care.

You remember what happened last time you went over there, right?... I know I just don't care.

You know that's what destroyed your first marriage...

You remember you still haven't paid off the last "must-have" purchase you made...

You remember you're on academic probation...

You remember you just got visitation rights again with your kids...

You know everyone who loves you has been saying the same thing about this...

It's worth risking our relationship on this, but I don't think she/he is right for you...

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Doing wrong is fun for a fool, but living wisely brings pleasure to the sensible

Proverbs 10:23

As a dog returns to its vomit, so fools repeat their folly.

Proverbs 26:11

Teenagers, 20-somethings, the reason your parents tend to react strongly to who you spend your time with is because we also know this verse.

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Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.

Proverbs 13:20

It's the companion of fools that suffers harm, not necessarily the fool themselves. It's the friend of a fool, the parent of a fool, the spouse of a fool, the brother or sister, or aunt or uncle, or cousin, or neighbor who ends up paying the price. A lot of us in the room have lived long enough to see someone we cared about, injured permanently or has even lost their life by getting into the car with someone foolish. A lot of us have been on the other end of a phone call from a friend who is married to someone living foolishly. I've counseled the children of parents who behaved foolishly, who thought it only affected them, but their children actually bore the brunt of the cost of their foolishness.

Solomon knows this because he received his wisdom directly from God Himself. And next week we're going to talk about that encounter. But he knows where this path will lead. And he repeats this sentiment all throughout the book of Proverbs.

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People ruin their lives by their own foolishness and then are angry at the Lord.

Proverbs 19:3

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The Remedy - Tragedy

Typically the only remedy for someone who is living foolishly is tragedy. Because they've said they could handle it, yeah I know but I don't care, Mmhmm yup, still going to do what I want anyways. And the only thing that will bring them to the point where they desire to hear wisdom is tragedy. It takes pain to get their attention. And your Heavenly Father loves you too much to stand by and watch you ruin your life by your own foolishness. He has filled the Scriptures with wisdom and invites you to ask Him for it. You can turn back today, you can bring Him all the broken pieces and ask Him to do what only He can do. He can restore what the enemy has stolen, or what you've given away in your foolishness you just have to humble yourself, repent, turn from your foolishness, and turn to Him.

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3. The Mocker (16 references in the Book of Proverbs)

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Mocker - Critical and condescending

Chances are, we don't have many mockers with us today, because they typically wouldn't step foot in a church. The Mocker is like a fool on steroids. The mocker isn't just content to stop at, "I know what to do, but I don't care." The mocker wants to criticize and condemn anyone who is trying to act wisely. Some examples we would see in our culture are people calling parents who want to stand up and protect their children from being exposed to appalling sexually explicit materials in their school as "domestic terrorists." Mockers under COVID wanted to keep the clubs open as an essential service, but prosecute churches for gathering together in the parking lot to worship. It's not enough for the mocker to see someone living wisely and not care, they have to actively pursue trying to stop or mock people who try to live wisely.

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Mockers are proud and haughty; they act with boundless arrogance.

Proverbs 21:24

The schemes of a fool are sinful; everyone detests a mocker.

Proverbs 24:9

If you've ever had a conversation with a mocker, if you've ever worked with or for a mocker. You know, you just have to give them a wide berth. No one can stand being around them. If you say one thing that they disagree with, they're coming in not just with a differing opinion but belittling attacking language that's meant to shut down any

dialogue that doesn't agree with their point of view. They try to intimidate with their intellect and shut down any position that doesn't agree with theirs.

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The Mocker responds to wisdom:

With condescension

With mockery

With hatred

I couldn't even think of phrases that I could put on the screen of how a mocker responds to wisdom, so I had to just put categories of responses.

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The Remedy - Repentance

Thankfully God gave us an amazing example of someone who by his own admission used to blaspheme the name of Christ and persecute his people. He breathed out threats anytime he encountered a Christian. He considered it his life's duty to persecute, prosecute, torture, defame, imprison, and execute as many Christians as he could get his hands on. A perfect example of a mocker: The Apostle Paul.

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15 This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and I am the worst of them all. 16 But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life. 17 All honor and glory to God forever and ever! He is the eternal King, the unseen one who never dies; he alone is God. Amen.

1 Timothy 1:15-17

It is possible for the Mocker to turn to God, but it will take incredible humility especially in relation to their boundless arrogance that Solomon described them having, to admit that they were wrong, and repent and turn towards God and follow His ways. But it can happen, so if you know a mocker don't give up on praying for them.

For each of these 3 groups of people eventually they're going to need wisdom. Eventually they're going to find themselves in a situation where they can't talk, or think, or criticize their way out. At some point they're going to need to make the right choice: to get out of debt, break an addiction, restore a broken marriage, or an estranged

relationship with a child. And Solomon says, eventually if you stay in any of these for too long, you can no longer recognize wisdom. In fact he said, they despise wisdom.

Eventually if you decide to stay naive, or complacent, or adversarial towards wisdom for too long, when you finally need it, even if someone shares with you exactly the wise thing to do, you'll have a really hard time even comprehending that it's the right thing to do.

So, in the first chapter of Proverbs Solomon personifies wisdom as a woman, Lady Wisdom, and she speaks to people in each of these categories.

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*20 Out in the open wisdom calls aloud,
she raises her voice in the public square;*

*21 on top of the wall she cries out,
at the city gate she makes her speech:*

*22 "How long will you who are simple love your simple ways?
How long will mockers delight in mockery
and fools hate knowledge?"*

*23 Repent at my rebuke!
Then I will pour out my thoughts to you,
I will make known to you my teachings.*

*24 But since you refuse to listen when I call
and no one pays attention when I stretch out my hand,*

*25 since you disregard all my advice
and do not accept my rebuke,*

*26 I in turn will laugh when disaster strikes you;
I will mock when calamity overtakes you—*

*27 when calamity overtakes you like a storm,
when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind,
when distress and trouble overwhelm you.*

*28 "Then they will call to me but I will not answer;
they will look for me but will not find me,*

*29 since they hated knowledge
and did not choose to fear the Lord.*

*30 Since they would not accept my advice
and spurned my rebuke,*

*31 they will eat the fruit of their ways
and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.*

*32 For the waywardness of the simple will kill them,
and the complacency of fools will destroy them;*

*33 but whoever listens to me will live in safety
and be at ease, without fear of harm.”*

Proverbs 1:20-33

And we'll end today with the same question that Lady Wisdom asked. If you find yourself in any of these 3 categories today my question is: How long? How long will you stay there, sit in those seats as the simple, the fool, or the mocker? What's it going to take for you to ask for wisdom, 20-something? Have you decided that you want to learn everything the hard way? That you want all the scars and regret and the pain of disregarding wisdom? For the foolish, what tragedy or pain are you waiting on to cause you to wake up and face up to the fact that you need wisdom? And more than likely if you're here today, someone has been begging you to listen to wisdom. So how much pain is it going to take? How much loss until it's enough? For the mocker, can you honestly say all of your intellectual maneuvering to shut down any voice of wisdom has made your life any better? Do you feel you have any deep meaningful relationships where people can speak into your life? Or has your mocking possibly cost you the people you love the most? So, how long?

Mockers you have to admit you're not the smartest person in the room. Fools you've got to start caring. And for the simple, you have the opportunity of a lifetime, you can have it all, but you cannot get there by yourself, you have to ask for it. And then listen and apply it. So, start asking today...

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