**Ecclesiastes: Live Above the Sun**

**17 Rules for Life**



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**Ecclesiastes 9:13-10:1-20**

This morning is going to be really different than normal style of preaching. I love narrative. I love a theme. For instance, last week was death, which was really fun––we are all going to die, so be happy! That was really fun.

This week it is going to be 17 rules for life. So there are not going to be transitions and a lot of stories; it will just be point by point, 17 of them, of here is what you should do with your life. What Solomon wants is for us to be wise. He wants us to walk in wisdom rather than foolishness. So, I want to talk for just a moment about what is wisdom. When you think about wisdom in Scripture, we have the wisdom literature. Think about wisdom. It is not just knowledge. Knowledge is knowing something. If you have knowledge, you know something rightly. You have knowledge about it and you know facts about it. That is knowledge. Wisdom goes one step forward. Wisdom is taking knowledge, what you know, and rightly applying it to your life. That is wisdom! Wise people don’t just know things. They know how to apply those things to their life. Those are wise people. They know how to live life. That is wisdom. But we also have fools, and fools can be for two reasons. Number one, they don’t have knowledge. You can be a fool because you just don’t know anything. You know some of those people, right? Some of those people know you! You can be a fool just because you don’t know. You can also be a fool and know a lot. You can be a smart fool. A smart fool knows things, but they don’t rightly apply what they know to life. That is wisdom. Wisdom is rightly applying what you know to life. So, what we want to do is be wise, and being wise is rightly applying the Word of God to everyday life. That is wisdom. If you want to be a wise person, rightly apply the Word of God to everyday life. Our text verse will be verse 2 of chapter 10 this morning.

**Scripture**

***“A wise man's heart inclines him to the right, but a fool's heart to the left.”***

Normally when we preach, there is one theme and we wrestle with that the whole way through. This morning, there are 17 bullet points so we are going to preach it a little differently and I want you to hear a little bit differently. The expectation is not that you walk out of here knowing 17 rules of life perfectly and you go live those out…hopefully, but that is a high bar. My hope is that as you listen to these 17 things a few of them will strike you as…*oh, I am not doing that and I should do that*…or…*I am doing that and I should not do that!* What we want to do is try to pursue wisdom and my hope is that you will grab hold of three of these rules of life and you will work them into life this week because you want to be wise. Rightly apply the Word of God to your life for the glory of Christ. Let’s just get the engine going.

1. **Wisdom wins but it is often forgotten**

Chapter 9:13–16 says this, “I have also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me. There was a little city with few men in it, and a great king came against it and besieged it, building great siegeworks against it. But there was found in it a poor, wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man. But I say that wisdom is better than might, though the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard.” So, he tells this little story about a little city. You can imagine a little village with not a lot of people. It is not strong. All of a sudden, there was a great king who wanted to overtake the city. The great king comes with all of his might, he has weapons of war, he comes, and he sets up all these siegeworks. The city has no chance because there is might here! There are weapons here! The city is going to fall, but all of a sudden, you have this reversal where what should happen does not happen. The city withstands this great, mighty king and the reason is because there was one poor, wise man in that city who somehow through wisdom delivered everyone.

Now, I will admit when I read that story I thought this is The Last Jedi. This is where they got The Last Jedi scene! So, I immediately went to Star Wars. I have not used Star Wars in a long time so I think we are overdue for a Star Wars illustration. But this is the scene, right? You have the first order coming, the rebels are in a cave hiding, there is no way out (at least they don’t think so yet, but there is a big door, and the first order comes! They have all of this might! You have Kylo Ren with all of the power and he is going to defeat them. There is no way out, but then all of a sudden, you have one guy––Luke Skywalker walks out in the snow and he is like…*let’s go!* They are like…*uh, this is going to be easy, fire on him!*

All of these blasters fire and he is done; there is no way he or they can win. This is game over for Luke. This is game over for the rebels. But then, it stops and Luke is just standing there like…*what do you got next?* Of course, they are all panicked! They bring more fire power and what they don’t realize is Luke is not really there. It is a hologram of Luke and he is outsmarting Kylo and all of the enemies. As they are distracted, what happens? The rebels get to escape.

It is kind of that scene in real life––there is a little city that is not going to make it, but through wisdom, through smarts, they outsmart the enemy and they deliver the city. So the conclusion is wisdom beats might. It is better to be wise than strong. It is better to be wise than to have all of the resources. What is most precious and most prized is wisdom. What you need to seek is wisdom, not just might. But then, he says the problem is it is often forgotten. Wisdom wins but it is often forgotten. This guy delivers the city people but soon forget about him. Nobody remembers him. History does not know his name. There is a lot of truth in that––wise people, though they deliver, they are often forgotten.

Can you imagine what would have happened in the city of Troy when the horse came in if some guy had said…*This seems strange, why are they giving us a horse? They are the Greeks; they are our enemies so why would they give us a present? Do you think we should check the horse?* What would have happened? They would have opened the horse, killed all the people in there, threw the horse out, burned it, and Troy would have been saved. If they had done that, we would not have a story called the Trojan horse because nobody would have remembered that! Nobody would have retold that. We still have that story today because there was no wise person there to save the day. The problem is when wisdom comes it is often forgotten. If there had been a guy who would have pointed out the horse, he would have long been forgotten now.

So we know is that wisdom wins but it is often forgotten, which means that in situations, to seek after wisdom and to do things that are wise, you have to do it not for vain glory, not for your reputation, and not for your legacy to live on, you do it because you love people and you are serving people. And guess what? When you make a wise decision it is going to win the day, but it is going to be forgotten tomorrow. That is how wisdom works! So why be wise? Because it is helping people and it is used for the glory of God. So do the right thing, do the wise thing, because it is going to help people even though it might not build your reputation or it might not make your name great. Be wise because wisdom wins the day.

1. **Listen past the noise**

Again, these are 17 random thoughts, so if you are wondering what the order is––I don’t know. It would be helpful if Solomon had an order, but here is just another thought for a rule for life, 17 independent things. Listen past the noise. Verse 17 says this, “The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools.” Notice what he says…the words of wisdom are in quiet, foolish words are yelled. They are yelled, they are noisy, but better is that quiet noise of wisdom. What this means for us is that we have to listen past the noise.

Do you know what I am reminded of? There are so many loud noises all around you. There are so many loud noises telling you what is true, what is good, what is right, and what you should pursue. It is very loud and noisy. Think about cable news. If you just turn it on, it is noisy, it is loud, and people are yelling. Think about social media. It is loud. It is noisy. Things are happening. In our culture, you can’t even go to the airport and sit down without a TV yelling something at you, right? It is always noisy! When you pump your gas, there is now a screen yelling at you…*Buy this! Say this!*

The world is noisy. Do you know what is really quiet? Your Bible. Your Bible is really quiet. Your Bible is not yelling at you. Your Bible is not just following you around everywhere you go. Of all the screens that you look at, your Bible is that quiet thing that you have to actually open, look at, and listen to. It does not just naturally yell at you. You have to turn down the noise of everything else. All of the other knowledge that is coming at you, you have to turn that down and then you have to turn up the voice of Scripture, open it, put your nose in it, and read it because that is how you hear the quiet wisdom. See, foolishness is loud. It is yelling so it is easy to find. But wisdom? You have to seek after it; it does not just happen. So, I want to ask you, look back at this week, how many of you just listen to the noise all around you and didn’t one time turn it down and turn up the voice of God by actually looking at your Bible and reading what God says? If you didn’t do that at all this week, if you didn’t put your nose in Scripture this week, you didn’t walk in wisdom this week. You didn’t! You walked in foolishness this week if you didn’t open your Bible and look at it, read it, and say Jesus, how do I live this. But you are like…*Man, I forgot!* I know you did! Because it is quiet! It is turned down! It is not coming at you. You have to come at it. That is why wisdom is hard. You have to seek after wisdom like a diamond or like precious jewels. You have to dig for it and seek after it. If we are going to be wise, we have to turn down the noise and turn up that voice of God. This week, let’s turn down the noise of everything else a little bit and let’s turn up the voice of God so that we walk in wisdom. We have to listen past the noise.

1. **The power of one**

Verse 18 says this, “Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.” We first saw that wisdom is better than might through the city illustration, and now wisdom is better than weapons of war. If you had to choose a bunch of weapons or wise people, choose wise people because they are wise and they can win the day, so we want wisdom over weapons of war. But then, it says *one* sinner can destroy everything. What we see is the power of one. Think about the contrast. In the city, there is one poor, wise guy who saves the day. Just one saves the day! Now we have just one sinner destroys everything. One person can make or break––the power of one––one can make a difference, so I think for me, when I am looking at that, I want to be the wise one who makes the good difference, not the one sinner who is walking in foolishness that brings everybody down. You have great power as one individual to make things good or to make things bad. So let’s be the wise people that save the day rather than the one who ruins everything.

1. **A little folly is too much**

A LITTLE folly. If you are thinking just how foolish can I be? None! Don’t be foolish, because a little is too much. Notice what the writer says in chapter 10, verse 1, “Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off a stench; so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.” So you have this bottle of perfume that is meant to smell good. There has been a lot of effort put into it. Of course, in the ancient world this is very delicate, a lot of money, and very expensive. When you smell it, it smells good unless you have a little fly that is buzzing around, lands in it, you put the lid on, and then the fly dies. You open it up and then you are like, ugh! What is that!? Well, there is a dead fly in it that is now messing the whole thing up. There is a lot of liquid, but one little bitty fly messes the whole jar, the whole smell up.

And then, he says just a little bit of folly can outweigh wisdom and honor. See, I think what we want is wisdom and honor, but what we have to be careful about is that little bit of folly that we are playing with. I think folly here is not you just not knowing something. It is folly in that you are living against the Lord. You are being a fool like in Proverbs. You are disobeying the Lord. You are in rebellion. And for some of us, it is this little small area of our life. Most of our life is good, most of our life is under the lordship of Christ, but there is this one area that is secret, is hidden, and nobody knows about. It is just ours and we love it so much. Solomon says that area is a dead fly. That area of foolishness and rebellion is a dead fly and guess what? You think it is not effecting your life, but it is effecting every part of your life. That little, hidden, tiny thing of foolishness is wrecking your honor. It is wrecking your wisdom. And guess what? It smells! People around you are either noticing or will notice because you can’t hide foolishness. You can’t hide rebellion. It is going to work its way out. So what do we do? We get rid of the fly. If a fly gets in the perfume, what should you do? Take it out, not leave it in! If you have foolishness and rebellion in your life, no matter how small it is and no matter if you think nobody is going to notice that, they will because it is going to cause your whole life to be flavored with THAT rather than Jesus. So deal with the little because a little is too much. A little rebellion, a little foolishness, or a little sin is too much. What you need is a life lived for the glory of Christ. Church, deal with the flies! Don’t just leave them in there and think they are just a little thing. No! It is a big thing because a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

1. **Your heart influences your life**

Your heart influences your life. Notice what he says in verse 2, “A wise man's heart inclines him to the right, but a fool's heart to the left.” Now, to the ancient mind, those people who would have heard Solomon say the right and the left, they would have known the right would be considered lucky or prosperous and the left would be sort of a sneaky, slight of the hand. When you think of the Latin word, sinister, it actually means left-handed. That idea is the right is the place of prominence. Think about Jesus sorting the sheep to the right and the left. The right is the right way and the left is the wrong way in this illustration.

So what causes you to go right or left? What causes you to do right or wrong? It is your heart. Notice, “a wise man’s heart inclines him.” Our hearts lead us. Your heart leads you. What we want to have is a wise heart, not a foolish heart. That means we have to be careful at what we love, what we want, what we long for, what we dream for, and what we desire. We have to be careful because we, as people, are wanters. We want things and our wants cause us to do things, so we have to be careful about what we want. We have to be careful about what we love because what we love becomes who we are and what we love is what we ultimately do. The writer is trying to say watch your heart. That is why in Proverbs chapter 4 it would say guard your heart, or keep your heart, for from it flows the wellspring of life. All of your life flows from your heart.

So, the question is, is your heart wise, or is your heart foolish? A wise heart wants the right things. That is how you judge it. How do I know if I have a wise heart? Well, it is wanting the right things. It is wanting the things that Christ promotes, that Christ speaks of. How do I know if I have a foolish heart? It is wanting the wrong things. It is wanting the things that are against Christ. It is wanting to pursue sin and the curse. It is loving this world, not the world to come. So, what we have to do is examine our hearts. How we want and how we love effects how we behave, so we have to watch what we love. We have to set our mind and attention on the right things so that we love the right things and our heart pulls us in the right places. Your heart influences your life, so watch out and keep an eye on your heart, keep an eye on what you love and what you want. Make sure it aligns with the glory of Christ.

1. **You can’t hide foolishness**

You can’t hide foolishness. It just shows up. Notice what he says in verse 3, “Even when the fool walks on the road, he lacks sense, and he says to everyone that he is a fool.” The foolish person makes themselves known. They are just open their mouths and you know that they are a fool. You can see that.

We took our boys to their first UK football game at Ole Miss. If you have been to a football game, it is a little different than basketball. Basketball is awesome! I love the environment at basketball games, but with basketball, sometimes you will stand up and cheer and then just sit down. With football, it is totally different. You stand the whole time on your seat and yell the whole game! That is football, right? So my kids are seeing football and how it is a little bit different, and there was one guy who was obviously a dad visiting his son who goes to UK. This dad thought he was going to be the cool guy––he was probably in his 50s––and being the cool guy means getting belligerent at 11:00 a.m. and being the coolest guy there, right? My kids were like, “Dad, what is this guy doing?” He was high fiving, falling, and screaming… *YEAHHHHH!!!!* I just said,“Ok kids, he is a fool.” He made himself known. It was very obvious. At sports games, often we make it known that we are fools. But even in real life, in real situations, fools often present themselves. It just shows up. You know the people who think they are hiding it but they aren’t. It makes us wonder if we are that person? Am I the who doesn’t know it, but everyone else thinks I am a fool because of what I am loving, what I am going after, how I am living, and what I am saying? What we want is for when we walk on the street and we open our mouths for people to see wisdom, not foolishness. You can’t hid foolishness. It is going to come out. So when it comes out, repent of it and turn to wisdom.

1. **Wisdom stays calm under pressure**

Notice what he says in verse 4, “If the anger of the ruler rises against you, don’t leave your place, for calmness will lay great offenses to rest.” This is a great rule of life! It is a great rule to think that wisdom stays calm under pressure. So if you have a ruler, or let’s just take that into the workplace, if you have a boss, or your superior, or your manager comes in and they are yelling, mad, and frustrated, do you know what the best thing you can do in that moment is? It is to stay calm. Just stay calm. If you want to gain respect among your peers, if you want to gain some leadership clout wherever space you are at, be calm when everybody else is in chaos. When chaos happens or panic happens, people are mad, they want to blame somebody, and no one has an answer. One of the best leadership principles is staying calm when everybody is freaking out. Do you know what will happen? People will look to you, they will gravitate to you, because you are not panicked, you are preparing and planning on how to get through it and how to make it to the next thing. If you can be a calming presence when everything is going nuts, what does it say? It says you are going to lay to rest a great offense. That anger, that malice, that yell, or that curse word, you are going to lay it to rest because through wisdom you are going to be calm when everyone else is screaming. Wisdom is going to win out, so be that person who is calm when everyone else is panicked.

1. **Folly often gets promoted**

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon is often frustrated with life because life does not work how it should. If you are good you should get good, if you are bad you should get bad, but life does not work like that. Often those that are bad get good and those that are good get bad. It doesn’t always work the way that it should and the reason is because this is life under the sun, this is life east of the Garden––this is not how God made the world, and this is how we have corrupted the world through sin. So a lot of times, the world does not work the way that we want it to work and that is a frustration to Solomon. He is going to be frustrated at this idea that folly often gets promoted because wisdom should get promoted, not folly! Notice what he says starting in verse 5, “There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as it were an error proceeding from the ruler…” Rulers often make errors. How do they make errors? They promote the wrong people. Verses 6–7 say, “…folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place. I have seen slaves on horses, and princes walking on the ground like slaves.” What happens in leadership is often that fools get promoted, not the rich. When he is using those words “the rich,” you have to think about the people he was writing to. If you are rich, you have been following the grain of the world…God has created it, you are prospering, you are making good decisions, and you have a good reputation. So this idea of “rich” can also be seen as the righteous. So the righteous, the wise, earns a low place and the fools are running the world, and Solomon is frustrated.Why are there fools in charge and those who are wise and have common sense don’t have any control over anything? It is frustration for him and it is just the reality. Foolishness often gets promoted. Leaders get in a place and they promote their buddy rather than who should get the role.

At work, you have seen this happen. Perhaps you thought you should have gotten it, but she got it and you are likehow did that happen? Well, it was not the right decision, but what do you do in that moment? I mean, Solomon is just kind of venting a little bit, but that really happens in life. We have all seen that! We all have leaders who are over us that we think…*How are they there!? So many other people could lead this better*. We have all felt that. We have all seen that and he says that is just the world that we live in because we are in the ‘already, not yet.’ Already the Kingdom of Christ is here, but it is not yet. The kingdom of the world is still here and foolishness often gets promoted over wisdom. So, what do you do? Well, I think you control what you can control. That is the only thing that you can do in those moments––control what you can control. Instead of protesting, firing back, and being mad at your boss, just control what you can control, put your head down, be wise, and do what you can. Then all of a sudden, wisdom has a tendency to win the day. If a fool is in a place they shouldn’t be and they are making really poor and bad decisions, it’s going to be found out and somehow they are probably going to fall, and you and those who are wise can be there to clean up the mess, make things work better, and go forward. Yes, it is true––fools often get promoted, so control what you can control.

1. **Fools ignore danger; wisdom uses caution**

Solomon is going to give some really practical things like you have work to do. You have some things around the house. You have a job to do. There is labor and work, but you should do it with caution rather than just going for it and not thinking through it. Let’s read what he says in verses 8–9, “He who digs a pit will fall into it, and a serpent will bite him who breaks through a wall. He who quarries stones is hurt by them, and he who splits logs is endangered by them.” He is saying when it comes to work, if you are digging a pit be careful because the pit you dig you could fall into. If you are running a chainsaw, if you are at a quarry, be careful because what you are working with could actually kill you. But fools don’t think about that. They are just full speed ahead, running, like who cares.

I grew up on a farm and my grandad, Pop, was not much on safety. He was on getting things done. Christian used to help out on the farm, and he could probably testify that both of us can be happy that we have of our fingers and toes because there was no sense of OSHA or doing things in the safe way. It was all about doing things just as fast as we could and hope for the best. Survival of the fittest was what we had on the farm! But then, we would have McKeel Equipment come out. They would send guys to work on our tractors with us. We would start working on something and they would say, “Uh, we should turn the tractor off before we climb under it.” I would say,“Why would you do that? My grandad never did that!” They said, *“*Well…you should because you could die.” “Oh! I guess that makes sense!” I can remember one time we were out working on the combine and I just climbed under the header, and they said, “WHOA, WHOA, WHOA, WHOA, WHOA! There are safety latches!” I said, “There are what?” “Yeah! These things are safety latches! Pull them and now it is locked and it can’t fall.” “Oh, good idea! Hey, Pop, did you know this?” Pop would say, “It’salright!” So I am very thankful in this moment that I have all of my fingers and all of my toes. We are trying now to do a little bit better job for when my boys come along. We are going to work hard, but we are going to live until tomorrow. Living tomorrow is also a good thing. It is not just about getting as much done as we can. Let’s survive and have all of our fingers to eat with. That is a good thing!

A fool just ignores this. A fool says let’s just go and do, but a wise person exercises a little bit of caution. The fool just breaks through this wall not thinking about there being vipers on the other side, because in the ancient culture vipers lived in walls. If you just bullied through it without thinking you were going to get bit and you were going to be in trouble. So break the wall, but make a plan to deal with the snakes that are going to come through. Wisdom does not ignore safety. It thinks through a project and takes the proper caution so that you live the next day. Fools ignore danger and wisdom uses caution.

At this point, I know you are thinking…*Man, I am at church! What does this have to do with anything? I thought we were talking about Jesus? What are we doing here?* Typically, when we think about Christianity today, it is about your ten minute quiet time in the mornings and hopefully getting to Heaven. So if it does not have to do with my ten minute quiet time or Heaven, then why are we talking about chainsaws? What are we doing? Is this church? What we see is when you read the Old Testament you have Leviticus that is a bunch of laws, and do you know what all of the laws were about? It was not about your ten minute quiet time, it was about every single area of your life––what you wore, how you worked, how you walked, how you slept––*every* area of your life was governed by the Word of God. Why was that? It was not because He was micromanaging, but because He wants you to flourish as a human being. So the reason we are talking about this is because God really cares about, not just your ten minute quiet time, He cares about every moment of your life. Everything you do (even when you are chain sawing a tree) God cares about it, and He wants you to do it with wisdom. He cares about every moment, every area of your life God cares about, and He wants you to walk in wisdom rightly applying His words and His ways to your everyday life because you are His child and He loves you. At 11:00 o’clock tomorrow, God cares about that space. Whatever you are doing at 11:00 o’clock tomorrow––laundry, work, kids, nap, or whatever it is––God cares about that and He wants you to walk in wisdom for your good and for His glory. So yeah, we are dealing with some things that doesn’t seem like quiet time issues because God is not a quiet time God. He is an all day, 24/7 God who cares about all of your life because He cares about you! He does! He cares about YOU, so be wise.

1. **Wisdom sharpens the axe**

I love this principle. Verse 10 says, “If the iron is blunt, and one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength, but wisdom helps one to succeed.” It is a really simple principle. If the axe you are cutting trees down with is dull, you have to use more strength, you have to swing harder, and every time you hit it, it is getting duller so you have to swing harder and swing harder. You have a guy out there just gritting as hard as they can trying to cut down a tree. Wisdom says…*Hold on, what if we stopped for a moment and sharpened the blade.* Foolishness says…*Well, that is going to take time off! We have to cut this tree down!* Wisdom stops and sharpens the axe. Foolishness is whatever you have to do, you do it with all of your might at full speed ahead, it is wide open, it is go, go, go, chop, chop, chop, and you never think about how you could work smarter, not harder. I am pretty sure this is where we got this from, right, work smarter, not harder! Stop and sharpen the axe so that you don’t have to just keep hitting as hard as you can, but you are working with the tool in the correct way.

Solomon is trying to get us to see that we need to stop for a moment and ask how could I do this better? Maybe for you, you are not a log man and you are not going to go out and cut down trees this week. Maybe you don’t even own an axe! But you can think about the axe in a lot of different ways. The axe is like those tools and skills that you have. Maybe for you, how could you take a pause from go, go, go, and stop and get better at something? How could you increase your skills at something? How could you think of a better system that could then work for you so that you are gaining time back to do those things that matter most to you? How could you take a moment and actually get better, sharpen your skills, and use wisdom in your work, in your life, and in your home so that you are working smarter, not harder and you have space to do the things that matter most to you? Again, God cares about you. He actually has a command that says stop and sharpen the axe. This is not about quiet time, but it is about a lot of your time. Maybe you can get a little bit of that back and then you are going to feel this idea that part of us being human is to do the tasks that God has for us*.* He wants us to do them well in wisdom, not in foolishness, so take time to sharpen the axe.

1. **Wisdom is patient**

Verse 11 says, “If the serpent bites before it is charmed, there is no advantage to the charmer.” It is kind of the same principle––wisdom is patient, wisdom takes time, wisdom waits. So if you are a snake charmer (I don’t know if we have any snake charmers in here, I have never done this before) I can just imagine that you want to wait until it is charmed. If not, you will get bit and be dead before you know it. You want to be patient; you want to make sure it is good and ready. Now it is charmed, now I can do my thing, I am safe, and now I can make a little bit of money off of this. Just really practically, you need to have a little bit of patience.

I don’t know how the Israelites were, but we as Americans are the most impatient people on the planet! Right? How many of you stood in front of a microwave this week and thought a minute is so long? A minute?! How long does a hot pocket take? We are impatient over a microwave minute! We are impatient. We don’t want to wait for anything, but there is wisdom in being patient. Think about it, we could bring this into all sorts of areas of life. Think about marriage. Some of us just want to fix things really quick, but sometimes you need a little bit of patience. If you go to fast, like a snake you are going to get bit. Some of us have been there! We have had that conversation. We have had that fight and we should have had just a little bit of patience, listened a little more, and spoke a little less. Wisdom has patience because wisdom knows that you can’t just bull your way through and make it all work. You have to be patient because patience has fruit from it.

1. **Words either help or hurt**

Verses 12–14 say, “The words of a wise man's mouth win him favor, but the lips of a fool consume him. The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness, and the end of his talk is evil madness. A fool multiplies words, though no man knows what is to be, and who can tell him what will be after him?” It is the principle that your words will either help or hurt. The words of a wise man or wise woman are bringing honor and bringing life, but the words of a fool are going to gobble you up. They are bringing death! They are coming for you! The Bible has so much to say about that. Think about James. James would say that your words, your tongue is like the rudder of a ship, it is like a bridle in a horse’s mouth, and it is like a little spark that can cause a forest fire. So be careful with your words because they give life or they give death. Fools don’t even know the future but they are telling everybody what is about to happen. They are just speaking an abundance of words, but they are bringing death upon themselves. So this week, watch your words.

1. **Work without wisdom is weary**

Verse 15 says, “The toil of a fool wearies him, for he does not know the way to the city.” Very simply, if you are a fool, your work is going to always be weary. It is always go, go, go. It is never fruitful and it is never accomplishing because you are not applying wisdom to your work. If you would apply wisdom to your work, you are going to have fruit rather than weariness.

1. **Foolish leaders hurt those they lead**

Verses 16––17 say, “Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, and your princes feast in the morning! Happy are you, O land, when your king is the son of the nobility, and your princes feast at the proper time, for strength, and not for drunkenness!” Leaders have an impact on those they lead. What you want are good leaders and what you want to be is a good leader. If you are in leadership, if you a manager or a boss and have people that you are over, how do you lead? Leadership matters. If you have leaders or are a leader who is just about yourself, you feast in the morning, you are getting drunk, and it is just a party––Solomon says no, you want leaders who are feasting for strength, not drunkenness, leaders who are feasting so they can be strengthened to serve you. Good leaders serve those that they lead. Bad leaders only serve themselves and they use their leadership to get more, to be seen more, and it is all about them. Which kind of leader are you? Are you a leader who leads for your sake or are you a leader that leads for their sake? Are you a leader that leads for the people under you? Are you serving them and for them, or are you just about yourself? Foolish leaders hurt those they lead, but wise leaders help those they lead.

1. **Laziness ruins the house**

Verse 18 says, “Through sloth the roof sinks in, and through indolence the house leaks.” This is a really easy principle. If you are lazy, if you are slothful, then you probably have a leaky roof. The toilet is overflowing and you are like…*I don’t know what is wrong with this thing. It just keeps overflowing. I am going to put a bucket here because there is also a leaky roof. Hey, is there anything else on Netflix? Could you hand me a bonbon?* Laziness is going to cause ruin to all of the good things in your life. Now, we know that God created rest. He wants you to rest, but He does not want you to be lazy. There is a difference! He wants you to work and rest and that is in tandem. Work six days rest one…that is in God’s good creation. Laziness says life is about leisure––sitting around, watching Netflix––that is the good life. Well, if that is the good life then you are going to have rain on your head because Netflix can’t fix your roof. So don’t be lazy. Pay attention and fix things. In your physical house, literally your roof could be leaking, but metaphorically, what about the house of your life? Are there leaks that you are not taking care of, that you are not watching over, or that you are not fixing because you are just idle? You are sitting back, and you don’t want to do the work to make things better. Laziness ruins the house.

1. **Money helps**

Verse 19 says, “Bread is made for laughter, and wine gladdens life, and money answers everything.” Solomon has dealt with money, and he knows the pursuit of money can’t satisfy you. If you have all of the money in the world, it can’t satisfy you. But now he is giving the concession and saying money does help. If you had to pick, do you want no money or some money? I will take some money! It helps because you can buy those good things that God has given for you to enjoy. Money is not an evil. Money is not a bad thing. Sometimes, in church, we give money this bad reputation like we are never to pursue money, never want money, and all money is bad. He says no, money is actually a good thing. Money has answers. It can help you in life. It is a good helper, but it’s a bad God, I think that is what he would say zooming out on the whole story of Ecclesiastes.

1. **Watch what you say**

Here is what he says in verse 20, “Even in your thoughts, don’t curse the king, nor in your bedroom curse the rich, for a bird of the air will carry your voice, or some winged creature tell the matter.” Even in your thoughts, don’t curse the king. Man, that might cut a few of us! Even in your thoughts, don’t dishonor those who the Bible says to honor, much less in our words! You might think…*well, it’s just in my house, I am just ranting about our leaders, and it’s just my kids here*. Well, they are watching, they are listening, and they are effected. *Well, it is just my boss…*people are listening! It’s just amazing how some of those secrets that you spread about that coworker, that person, or that family member, gets around…well, I just told her, how did everybody know? Solomon is saying it is like little birds come in and carry things around. We actually created a bird, right, called Twitter. Solomon would say it is already going on; you don’t really need Twitter help! Be careful of how you use your mouth as a vent because your mouth exposes your heart when you vent about those who should be honored, because every person who is made in the image of God should have honor and not dishonor. When we vent about people and what they do and who they are––not just what they do or their policies, but the PERSON––little birds might carry that around and it might come back to bite you. So be careful with that coworker, that boss, or that person that you think you just need to vent a little bit about because venting can come back around. What we should do is honor those who deserve honor, and that is every image-bearer of God, that is every person on the planet. We can disagree, but we want to honor. So, be careful about your words. Watch what you say because they have a way of coming back to you.

So, what does this all have to do with Jesus? I just want you to be reminded that in foolishness our first parents DIED seeking wisdom outside of God. That is how our first parents died! They wanted wisdom apart from God. But we, through the cross, come back under the wisdom of Christ and we live! We see what Jesus has to do with this in Colossians chapter 2, which says, “God’s mystery, which is Christ, in whom is hidden ALL of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” In Christ, we have all of the wisdom and treasures of knowledge. If you want wisdom, if you want to be wise, we have 17 rules for life. You can’t do those apart from Christ. Outside of Christ you will be like our first parents, you will want your own wisdom, your own knowledge, and your own ways, and they died! What we need to do is come through, not the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we need to come through the tree of the cross. By way of the tree of the cross, we can come under the lordship of Christ and His wisdom rule over us so that we pursue right things. We apply rightly His Word and His ways to our life. Because here is the truth––God does not just care about your ten minute devotion, He cares about it, but He also cares about every minute past that. He cares about your whole life. Do you know what He wants? He wants you to walk in wisdom this week. How do you get wisdom? It is in the person of Jesus Christ. It is not seeking outside of Him it is seeking it in Him; and in Him, you walk in His wisdom. What is wisdom? It is rightly applying the Word of God and the ways of God to everyday life. So, you have an opportunity this week. You can either be a fool or you can be wise. Solomon would say be wise for your good but also for the glory of Christ!