

Wisdom in an Out-of-Order World

Ecclesiastes 10

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I. Guarding the Heart in an Out-of-Order World (v.1-4)

Solomon starts this chapter with a visual illustration. A perfume represents something of high quality and luxury. A few dead flies fall into it and make it stink – spoils the whole thing. What was once pleasant has now become offensive.

This is what foolishness does. Notice the word “little.” Foolishness doesn’t need to be big to cause damage. A person may live wisely and be known for honor and integrity. But one lapse in judgement, one foolish thing can ruin your reputation and corrupt years of hard work. We have seen this in leaders, in families, and even in ministries.

We should always choose wisdom and not folly. But what kind of wisdom was Solomon talking about? This wasn’t practical wisdom nor worldly wisdom. Solomon was talking about a biblical God-centered wisdom which he wrote in Proverbs 9:10 – “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” This wisdom recognizes God, honors God, and submits to God.

Now verse 2 tells us the source. When Scripture talks about the heart, it doesn’t refer to the physical heart or emotions, but the center of the person – our thoughts, our will, our inner direction. What we do on the outside, comes from what is happening on the inside.

“Toward the right” represents the moral compass of what is good, proper, and pleasing. The wise person’s inner life moves him toward what is right – not perfectly, but in a consistent direction. Foolishness goes the opposite way, doing what is wrong and misguided.

The real issue is the heart. We don’t just manage behavior; we must really examine our hearts. The direction of our heart determines our destination.

From illustration to everyday life. The fool “walking along the road” shows that even in this normal daily situation, he lacks judgement, lacks discernment, lacks understanding. A fool doesn’t need to say anything; it’s obvious he’s a fool because whatever is in the heart will show in how we carry ourselves. People will see it. We cannot hide a foolish heart with a polished exterior forever. Don’t focus on appearance, focus on your heart. Wisdom starts with the fear of the Lord.

Solomon brings us into a life situation of immense pressure in verse 4. Pressure reveals character. Here, someone in authority (a ruler, a leader, a boss) is angry. Our natural response is to panic, to defend ourselves, to retaliate, or to flee. But it says “do not



abandon your position.” This means to stay steady, don’t react impulsively, stay composed. Calm wisdom can quiet down great offenses – not by reacting, but by restraint. Wisdom is not just what we know, but how we respond when the pressure is high.

In an out-of-order world, we need Godly wisdom that starts in the heart, shows in ordinary life, and stays steady under pressure.

II. Seeing the Disorder in an Out-of-Order World (v.5-11)

We see again the words “under the sun” which we already know speaks of life in this fallen world. Solomon sees something wrong with the system of leadership. Those in authority are making wrong decisions because the foolish people are being elevated. They are given positions of influence, power, and responsibility. Now, the rich here isn’t just about those with money, it can refer to those who are capable, competent, and worthy. They are the ones being placed low.

In verse 7, “slaves” and “princes” represent the lowest and highest positions in society. Riding a horse symbolized authority and status. Those who are not fit to lead are elevated while those who should be leading are pushed down.

These are strong pictures of reversal and disorder – a world where things are not as they should be. This is reality under the sun, and Solomon calls it an evil. But he is not telling us to fix the system, he is helping us understand that the world we live in is not always going to be fair and properly ordered. Instead of living in frustration, we are called to live in Godly wisdom.

Now if the leadership system is broken, we shouldn’t be surprised if our day-to-day activities will also have problems. In verses 8-9, Solomon gives us examples of normal jobs (digging and construction); nothing wrong with these jobs, nothing immoral, but we learn that even ordinary actions carry risk and uncertainties. Life is just in disorder.

In verse 10, we see someone working harder, but not smarter – having more effort but less effectiveness. This is the principle: *Wisdom has the advantage of giving success*. Strength alone isn’t enough. Wisdom makes work effective. Use Godly wisdom to avoid risk.

And to further emphasize the importance of wisdom, verse 11 gives us another truth – there is wisdom in waiting for the right time. Wisdom is not just seen in speech, but also in knowing WHEN.

Do we know God’s wisdom? Do we know when to use it?

III. Speaking Wisely in an Out-of-Order World (v.12-15)



From work to words. “Gracious” means helpful, fitting, appropriate. The wise person’s words build up. A fool’s words don’t just harm others but himself; it escalates from foolish to destructive. In verse 14, a fool thinks that the more words he says equals more wisdom. A fool speaks as if he knows everything, even the future! This is why Solomon says in verse 14 that no man knows what will happen.

Wisdom knows what and when to speak and knows also when to be quiet. Sometimes the wisest thing is to say less. If our speech isn’t guided by Godly wisdom, it’s useless. Words reveal what’s in the heart.

In verse 15, we see the same foolishness in the fool’s life. A fool is working and exerting effort but is weary and exhausted because he’s doing it in the wrong way. We say this because going to a city is a simple task; it is basic direction. The fool has a no direction, no wisdom guiding his steps, leading to a misdirected life. Without Godly wisdom, effort becomes wasted.

Don’t just ask “Am I working hard?” but “Am I walking and working wisely, the way God wants me to?”

IV. Living Responsibly in an Out-of-Order World (v.16-20)

When foolishness reaches the position of leadership, everyone is affected. “Woe” is a warning of trouble. The word “lad” speaks of immaturity, a leader who lacks wisdom, discipline, and sound judgement. “Morning” refers to the time for work, the time for responsibility. Instead of leading, they are feasting, prioritizing pleasure. A leadership that is immature and self-indulgent brings trouble.

From warning to blessing. In verse 17, Solomon speaks of character – a ruler who is trained, disciplined, and fit to lead. They do not live for pleasure. They eat for strength and responsibility.

One leadership lives for self, the other lives with purpose. The result? One brings ruin, the other brings blessing.

This is very real. Leadership matters in a nation, in an organization, in a family, and in ministry. But this doesn’t apply only to kings; it applies to all of us. Are we living for pleasure (foolishness)? Or are we living for purpose (wisdom)?

When responsibility is neglected, there are consequences. In verse 18, “indolence” means laziness, not doing what should be done. Foolishness is self-destructive. Same concept with a house that is ignored will slowly decay. When a person gives in to laziness, he eventually becomes unable to care for himself.



Please note in verse 19, Solomon was not praising earthly enjoyment. He was showing a fool's outlook, how the foolish think under the sun. Running after pleasure and money while neglecting responsibility.

Solomon closes the chapter with something personal. Nothing public, but in the privacy of our bedchamber. A place with no audience, where no one sees. And even there, we are not to speak against those in authority or influence. Why? Because what you think is hidden may become known. This is really about the heart. If in private there is bitterness, resentment, disrespect, it will eventually show. If we truly have Godly wisdom, it should show even when we are alone. If not, that's hypocrisy – foolishness.

In this out-of-order world, we need to live with Godly wisdom – guarding our hearts, speaking wisely, and living responsibly.

