

Wisdom in an Age of Folly

Discernment, Decision Making, and Facing and Unknown Future

Introduction: Folly vs. Wisdom

- What is Folly?
 - Prideful rebelliousness against God that leads to wicked thoughts, words, and actions.
 - “The wicked fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They act corruptly, they commit abominable deeds.” (Psalm 14:1)
 - What is Wisdom?
 - A gift from the Holy Spirit given to true children of God that enables them to humble themselves before Him, fear Him, understand His word, and obey His will.
 - “To know wisdom and discipline, to understand the sayings of understanding, to receive discipline *that leads to* insight, righteousness, justice, and equity, to give prudence to the simple, to the youth knowledge and discretion; let the wise man hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire guidance, to understand a proverb and an enigma, the words of the wise and their riddles, the fear of the Lord the beginning of knowledge; ignorant fools despise wisdom and discipline.” (Proverbs 1:2-7)
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When and How to Apply Wisdom to Our Lives

- Discernment:
 - Discernment is the ability to know the difference between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world and choosing to reject anything that contradicts, diminishes, softens, ignores, or trivializes the Truth found in God’s Word.
 - The world can offer us no legitimate guidance for how to live wisely because worldly wisdom is based on the heart of man, and the Bible clearly states:
 - “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9)
 - Instead, we look to God’s Word for guidance about how we are to think, feel, speak, and act.

- **Wise thoughts:**

- “Therefore this I say, and testify in the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their mind, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart. *And* they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality [k]for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn [l]Christ in this way— if indeed you heard Him and were taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, to lay aside, in reference to your former conduct, the old man, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and to put on the new man, which [n]in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” (Ephesians 4:17-24)
- “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is dignified, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (Philippians 4:8)

- **Wise feelings:**

- “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruits, without doubting, without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (James 3:17-18)

- **Wise words:**

- “Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one *of you* with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a *word* as is good for building up what is needed, so that it will give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and anger and wrath and shouting and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Instead, be kind to one another, tender-hearted, graciously forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has graciously forgiven you.” (Ephesians 4: 25, 29-32)

- **Wise deeds:**
 - “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” (Titus 2:11-14)
- Decision Making:
 - The christian life is a series of decisions that are made for the glory of God.
 - All decisions, even the smallest ones, should be made thoughtfully, wisely, and in accordance with what we know to be True in God’s Word and according to His will.
 - The basic 3-step process for making wise decisions (adapted from John MacArthur’s booklet, “Found: God’s Will”) is:
 - **Be in constant prayer:**
 - “Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
 - **Know God’s Word:**
 - “Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You.” (Psalm 119:11)
 - **Take action:**
 - “Diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments.” (Deuteronomy 28: 1b)
- The guiding principles of the Christian life are: **Know God’s Word & Do His Will**
- Some decisions are harder to make than others, but God’s promise to us is that His Word is sufficient to provide the wisdom we need to face any of life’s challenges and to do good all the days of our lives:
 - “All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be equipped, having been thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

- Facing and Unknown Future:

• **YOU ARE NOT A VICTIM OF GOD'S WILL; YOU ARE A BENEFICIARY OF IT.**

- The fact that the future is unknown to us, does not mean it is unknown to God.
- We know that God is sovereign, good, wise, and kind, and that His will is perfect.
- Because we know this, and because the desire of our hearts should always be, "Not my will but God's be done," it doesn't matter what the future holds because we know that whatever God ordains, He "works together for good to those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." (Ephesians 8:28).
- To complain about, try to manipulate, rebel against, fear, be anxious about, or disobey God's will is to believe that God could ever be anything but utterly just, which could never be!
- God is not a villain, His will is not oppressive, and we are not victims of His sovereignty. Even God's correction, reproof, chastisement, and judgement are good. So are the trials He sovereignly allows us to endure! We know that "the testing of our faith produces endurance." (James 1:3), so anything that we face in life, even those things that are bewildering, discouraging, and downright difficult, are still evidences of the goodness of God.
- Gratitude is the answer when facing hard things in life. As 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17 states, " Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus."

• **Because we are finite, we cannot know the future. Furthermore, this is not a burden God asks us to bear:**

- "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And which of you by worrying can add a single cubit to his life span? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field,

which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be [w]added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Matthew 6:25-34)

- **God commands us to cast our cares on Him. His love for us cures our anxiety because we know His heart is pure and His will is good:**

- “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. Be of sober *spirit*, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished among your brethren who are in the world. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, strengthen, confirm, *and* ground you. To Him *be* might forever and ever. Amen.” (1 Peter 5:6-11)
- “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10)

Application: Passages for Everyday Wisdom

- Wisdom is the pursuit of a pure life, both in thought and deed:
 - “Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love, *and* peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. And the Lord’s slave must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may give them repentance leading to the full knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses *and* escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.” (2 Timothy 2:22-26)

- Wisdom is understanding that suffering for the sake of righteousness is a blessing:
 - “And who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their fear, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make ¶a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and fear, having a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who disparage your good conduct in Christ will be put to shame. For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing good rather than for doing wrong.” (1 Peter 3:13-17)
- Wisdom is knowing that the opposite of anxiety is not courage by thankfulness:
 - “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your considerate *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:4-7)