

# A Little Folly

by Chuck Smith

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*The book of Ecclesiastes teaches us that life apart from God is empty and futile, and that wisdom and giving are key to living a fulfilling and meaningful life.*

**Duration:** 25:05

**Scripture:** Proverbs 22:6, Ecclesiastes 9:10, Ecclesiastes 10:1, Ecclesiastes 12:1, Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 9:6, Galatians 6:7

**Topics:** "Folly"

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## Description

In this sermon, Pastor Chuck Smith continues his verse-by-verse study through the book of Ecclesiastes. He begins by discussing the story of a wise man who saved a city from a powerful enemy through his wisdom. From this story, Pastor Chuck concludes that wisdom is better than weapons of war. However, he also emphasizes the destructive power of sin, stating that one sinner can destroy a lot of good. He ends the sermon by encouraging listeners to give generously and trust in God's provision, and to remember to fear God and serve Him faithfully, especially in their youth.

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## Transcript

Oh, let the Son of God enfold you With His Spirit and His love Let Him fill your heart and satisfy your soul  
Oh, let Him have the things that mold you And His Spirit like a dove Will descend upon your life And make you whole  
And now with today's message, here's Pastor Chuck. The words of the preacher, the Ecclesiastes. Solomon is identified as the writer written in his later years when he had turned his heart away from the Lord And he sees in this book the emptiness and the futility of life at its best, apart from Christ.

He had tasted of everything. He had done everything. He said there is not a single thing that he desired that he did not withhold from himself.

And yet having tasted of it all, he speaks of the emptiness of it all. The emptiness of all of those worldly accomplishments, worldly glory, the riches and the fame was empty in and of themselves. But in chapter 10, he continues really with the thought that we had at the end of chapter 9. You do understand that when Solomon wrote this, he didn't write it in chapters.

Chapter 9, verse 18, and then opened up chapter 10. But it's just one book, one scroll without any divisions. Those divisions were created later for our benefit.

It's a lot easier to look up a scripture because you have it in the chapters and verses so we can make reference to a particular scripture. But originally it wasn't set out that way. Now, in setting it out in chapters, it's extremely handy for us in referencing scriptures.

But unfortunately, we, in our Western mind, and the way we read when we come to the end of a chapter, we think, well, that's the end of that chapter and now we're going to begin a new chapter kind of a thing. And we don't often carry through the thought from the previous chapter. So you say, well, I'm going to read five chapters of the Bible tonight.

And you may be quitting right in the middle of a thought. If you'd read on the next chapter, then you'd carry on. And in studying it as we are, unfortunately, we many times are making a break right in the middle of a development of a thought.

And such is the case in chapter 9 and chapter 10. There should be no break, but fortunately, we will go right through and we'll see the continuation of thought. But in the previous chapter, he was talking about a city that was being besieged by a strong enemy and there was this wise man, poor man, but he was very wise, and he delivered the city by his wisdom from this powerful enemy that was besieging the city.

So he came to the conclusion that wisdom is better than weapons of war. However, one sinner can destroy a lot of good. Now, in that idea, one sinner can destroy a lot of good, he goes right into the thought that dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking odor.

The flies, when they would swarm into the oil of the apothecary, sort of the perfumed oils, they would keep them covered because if the flies begin to swarm in it, it isn't long before it begins to get rotten and begins to stink. And so it was something that was very common to their relating to life. I mean, he talks about this and they understood exactly what it means.

We think dead flies in the ointment of the apothecary, you know, what's that all about? But the people at that time understood completely as they saw these swarms of flies and they would get into the oil, the perfumed oils, and turn them into a stinking odor. But the analogy that he is drawing, so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor. You take a man who has a great reputation for wisdom, a man who is held in high esteem and honor, all it takes is just a little folly to turn that whole opinion of the man.

The idea is one sinner can destroy much good. It just takes a little bit. Just a little folly can take a man who is in authority, power, great reputation, and just bring him down very quickly.

So a little folly to him who is in reputation. A wise man's heart is at his right hand and a fool's heart is at his left. Now, the idea behind that is a wise man's heart will lead him to right things, to right actions, whereas a fool's heart will lead him to wrong activities and wrong actions.

The idea was the right hand was always the place of honor, respect, and esteem. The left hand was really the place of sort of put down or rejection. You remember Jesus, when he comes again, will gather together the nations and he will separate them as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goat and to those on his right hand he will say, Come ye blessed of the Father, inherit the kingdom.

The right hand, the place of honor, it leads to honorable things. However, the fool will lead to dishonorable things. Yea, yes, or yea, also, yes, also, when he that is a fool walks by the way, his wisdom faileth.

And he soon reveals to everybody that he is a fool. I mean, a fool just can't hide it. It's going to come out.

As he walks in the way, it becomes very obvious that the guy's a fool. So, his actions speak to everybody the fact that he is a fool. Now, changing the thought, if the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place, for yielding pacifyeth great offenses.

Basically, he is making reference here to a man who sits as a counselor to a king. And the king doesn't follow your counsel or he turns from the advice that you have given him. Thus, his spirit rises up against the council.

Don't get in a huff and quit and say, well, if you're not going to listen to me, then I'm leaving, you know. Don't remove from your place. For yielding will bring peace, even where there have been great offenses.

Just give the point. A soft answer turneth away wrath. It's so easy to bring an end to a dispute by just saying, well, maybe you're right.

You know, what difference does it make? I'm amazed that what a great fire a little matter kindled. You know, some of the big fights that you have are over whether or not it was dark chocolate or milk chocolate, you know. And divorces can come about from such things.

I mean, it just builds up and up and up and up and up, you know. And yielding will pacify great offenses. Just say, well, you're probably right.

And that's the end of it. It ends all of the argument, the offense and the fighting and the bitter feelings and all that rise out of it. Now, he said, there's an evil which I've seen under the sun.

It's an error that many times proceeds from the ruler. For I have seen folly that has been set in great dignity while the rich sit in a low place. The exalting, really, of the fools and the denigrating of the wise.

I have seen servants upon horses riding in the place of honor while princes were walking as the servants on the earth. So I've seen a reversal of order, he said. I've seen fools that have been exalted while the wise men are sort of put down.

I've seen princes who were put down while the servants were exalted. And here's a proverb. In fact, there's a few here.

He that digs a pit shall fall into it. You set a trap for someone else and quite often you're caught in your own trap. In our neighborhood, there is a posted 25-mile-an-hour speed zone.

The people don't always observe it. And every once in a while, some of the people in the neighborhood call the Newport Beach Police Department and they ask them to set up a radar unit to keep the people at the proper speed to make sure that they don't exceed the 25-mile-an-hour speed limit. The interesting thing about that is that the people who called and complained and asked that the police set up the radar trap were invariably the ones that got caught exceeding the speed.

And it's sort of a joke in the neighborhood because the fellow who called and did the most complaining got caught himself for speeding. So, you dig a pit, and that is the idea of digging a pit for a trap to trap an animal or whatever. He who digs a pit will fall into it himself.

And whoso breaks a hedge or a wall, a serpent shall bite him. Now, they used to have these rock walls between their vineyards. And if a person goes to break down a rock wall, there are these little snakes that would nest in these rock walls.

And so, in taking down a rock wall, you were very apt to be bitten by a snake. The idea, it's a dual type of digging a pit. You'll fall into it.

You go to hurt someone by breaking down their wall, and you will get hurt. You'll be bitten by the serpent. And whoever removes the stones, these stones were the markers for the field, and a person would try and pick up a little extra acreage by going out and moving these stones that marked off the limits of the field.

If you go to remove the stones, you'll be hurt therewith. And he that splits wood shall be endangered thereby. Now, if the iron, and that is the axe is dull, if you do not sharpen the edge, then you've got to put more strength to the job.

But wisdom is profitable to direct. In other words, rather than using all of your strength with a dull axe, it takes a little effort to sharpen it, and it takes then a lot less effort to do your job. Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment, and a babbler is no better.

Now, that is a babbler will bite you, a person who's just, you know, there are people who are just mouthy, and the Bible here calls them babblers. And unless a serpent is enchanted, now they did have those guys with the flutes and the serpents, you know, they were enchant the serpents and all, and unless they are enchanted and all, they'll strike. But so with a babbler, a mouthy person, they'll strike you.

You've got to watch out for them. The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious, but the lips of a fool will swallow him up. So you can tell what a man is by his words.

The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness, and the end of his talk is mischievous madness. That is the fool. They'll swallow him up.

His words start off with foolishness, and the end of it is just mischievous madness. A fool also is full of words, but a man cannot tell what shall be and what shall be after him. Who can tell him? People do a lot of talking, but really you don't know what is going to take place tomorrow.

The labor of the foolish worrieth every one of them, because he knows not how to go to the city. Woe to thee, O land, when your king is a child and your princes eat in the morning. Now, the idea is that of dining and eating, and if your princes are eating in the morning, you're in trouble.

It means that they're drinking in the morning and eating, and they really should be about their business during the day, but they're playboys eating in the morning. Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles and your princes eat at the proper time, and they eat not for pleasure, but they eat for strength and not for drunkenness. By much slothfulness the building decayeth.

I think we all know that, don't we? Our houses, they need constant upkeep, and it's sort of a frustrating thing when you just see your house going to pieces in front of you, and you just don't have the time to do the things you need to do to keep the house up. So by much slothfulness the building decayeth, and through idleness of the hands the house just drops through. A feast is made for laughter, wine makes merry, but money answers all things.

Now, how many of you really believe that? Money is the answer to everything. There are people that do believe that. Anything and everything can be answered by money.

Curse not the king, no, not in your thought, and curse not the rich, while you're in your own bedroom. For a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter. Have you ever heard them say, a little bird told me? Ever wonder where they got that? This is the scripture where that saying comes from.

Where Solomon said, just be careful what you say, even in secret, even in the privacy of your own home. It's amazing how, you know, your words can get out, how you can be exposed. And so, just be careful of the things that you say, even in secret.

Cast your bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days. Now, there are those who understand this and interpret it as the bread, meaning the wheat or the grain from which the bread is made. And in Egypt, they used to have a practice in the flooding of the Nile River, when it was overflowing its banks, to just stand there where the banks were overflowing and toss their wheat into the water.

The overflowing bank, you know, the overflowing river, overflowing bank, just toss the wheat in. And of course, it's carried out then into the plains, into this rich soil that is being carried with the flood. And that was the way they spread their seed.

Rather than going through the fields, they would just toss it on the water and let the river carry it into the fields that were beside the river at the time of overflow. And then it would take root and they would have a rich, rich harvest of wheat. And they think that Solomon is making reference to that practice of casting the wheat on the water.

And you will find it after many days. It'll grow, it'll come up, and you'll have a rich harvest. The idea is that of receiving by giving away.

Now, it is a strange principle that is taught in the Bible, a spiritual principle, and that is a person who gives shall receive, and you gain by giving. Jesus expressed the principle. He said, He said, Paul said that.

If you sow bountifully, you will reap sparingly. If you sow bountifully, you will reap bountifully. So the more you give to the Lord, to others, the more you're going to receive.

God will never be a debtor to you. The more you give to God, the more God is going to return to you. He'll never be your debtor.

We'll return with more of our verse-by-verse venture through the Bible in our next broadcast as Pastor Chuck continues his study through the book of Ecclesiastes, and we do hope you'll make plans to join us. But right now, I'd like to remind you that if you'd like to secure a copy of today's message, simply order Ecclesiastes 10, verse 1 when visiting [thewordfortoday.org](http://thewordfortoday.org). And while you're there, we encourage you to browse the many additional biblical resources by Pastor Chuck. You can also subscribe to the Word for Today podcast or sign up for our email subscription.

Once again, all this can be found at [thewordfortoday.org](http://thewordfortoday.org). If you wish to call, our toll-free number is 1-800-272-WORD. And our office hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pacific Time. Again, that's 1-800-272-9673.

And for those of you preferring to write, our mailing address is The Word for Today, P.O. Box 8000, Costa Mesa, California, 92628. And now, on behalf of The Word for Today, we'd like to thank all of you who share in supporting this ministry with your prayers and financial support. And be sure to join us again next time as Pastor Chuck continues his verse-by-verse study through the Bible.

That's right here, on the next edition of The Word for Today. And now, once again, here's Pastor Chuck with today's closing comments. May the Lord bless you this week and prosper you and all that you do for Him.

And may we follow the exhortations of fearing God, doing the work of the Lord, and trusting God for the fruit that will come. Take advantage of the opportunities that you have now in knowing God, in serving God. And for you younger ones, remember the Creator in the days of your youth.

Give your youth to Him. You'll never be sorry. As Easter is approaching, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is on the hearts of Christians everywhere and how they might witness this beautiful story to their loved ones.

With this in mind, The Word for Today would like to present a special MP3 entitled My Redeemer Lives that includes 14 reassuring messages to answer the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and a life that should bring hope to everyone. Also included is a special presentation of the crucifixion from a doctor's perspective as well as a powerful salvation message shared by Pastor Chuck. And when you order My Redeemer Lives MP3, we'll include a free CD by Pastor Chuck to witness to your loved ones that Jesus is indeed the Messiah.

This CD entitled A Risen Love clearly presents the evidence to help others make a decision that will impact their immediate and eternal future. For more information, contact The Word for Today at 800-272-9673 or visit us online at [thewordfortoday.org](http://thewordfortoday.org). This program has been sponsored by The Word for Today in Costa Mesa, California.

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