

Proverbs 14- Wisdom vs Folly -- Who Wins

by Shane Idleman

The sermon emphasizes the importance of wisdom, submission, and surrender in seeking God's guidance and guidance in our lives.

Duration: 57:50

Scripture: Proverbs 14:12-31

Topics: "Fear Of God", "Seeking Wisdom"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of having the fear of the Lord in our hearts and the need for a revival in our nation. It addresses the current state of society where people lack moral values and the fear of God, leading to destructive decisions. The speaker highlights the contrast between wisdom and folly, urging listeners to seek wisdom and make decisions based on God's Word. The sermon concludes with a message of hope and redemption through calling upon the name of the Lord for salvation and restoration.

Transcript

Lord, we just come to you tonight, Lord, with a heavy heart, Lord, for our nation. We do pray for the families in Connecticut, Lord. We just can't understand this tragedy, Lord, but you can.

Lord, just take our broken hearts, Lord, and begin to repair and restore them. But also, Lord, just bring a sense of peace and compassion over that community, Lord. Lord, Lord, you be with the parents as they celebrate Christmas alone, Lord, and just the horror that they went through, be there for them.

Lord, we pray for this nation. Lord, without you there is no hope. Lord, but also pray for clarity and direction tonight.

Lord, I pray that you give my words precision as we look to your word. Lord, begin to break the hardest heart. Lord, and begin to restore those who need hope and restoration.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Ashton's going to get the Christmas lights. If I forget, I get scolded for that, leaving those on. You know, my heart is definitely heavy with what's going on, obviously, in Connecticut.

And I don't know what to say. It might seem a little different tonight up here, but it's with three little kids. I just can't, I just really can't fathom that.

It's been weighing on me for a few days, and just going and execute 20 kids. What do you do? You know, it's just that the world's looking for answers. And, of course, the big stories are going to be now motive and what happened.

People, this is what a nation looks like when they no longer fear God. This is what the product of an environment that raises kids and tells them, you came from animals and there's no God and life doesn't matter. This is the byproduct of that.

So it's sad to see. And without God bringing a national revival to our nation, we're going to see more things like this in the news. It's just sad to say, but this should force us all on our knees to pray and petition God and seek Him like never before.

I mean, this is really unspeakable. I can't fathom it. It's just, you know, so that's been on my heart.

And I'm trying to prepare the sermon and, you know, it is what it is. But that's where my heart's at tonight. So I might seem a little distant or off just with three kids, myself, and watching that.

I think I made the mistake of watching too much of it. You know, you start to really focus in on what's going on. I can't believe this.

And I don't know if we're meant to handle that much media attention and different things. And I think what's going to come out, too, is when they look at this young man's lifestyle, you're going to see a lot of things in there. You know, they've already commented on the video games and this graphic.

Yeah, exactly. What you put in the mind is coming out in the action. So we've talked about that enough.

I don't want to belabor that point. But if you do have your Bibles, turn to Proverbs 14. We're going through Proverbs systematically for you that have not been here.

I also include it in the bulletins if you don't have your Bibles. You can follow along through Proverbs 14. And next week we're expecting full house.

So be here early if you want good seats. We're going to pull out some extra seats. And usually on Christmas and Easter, that's when everybody comes and listens.

And then we see them again next Christmas. So those who come tomorrow or next Saturday, we're going to go ahead and tell them, not Merry Christmas, but Happy Easter because that's the next time we'll see a lot of people. So just be prepared.

But as you're turning to your Bibles, Proverbs 14, you'll see the quote there on the cover that I've been reminded of many times over the last few years. It's that a strong foundation will cost you something, but a weak foundation may cost you everything. And one of the things we find in Proverbs is it is difficult.

It's difficult to apply wisdom to our life. So a strong foundation will cost us something, but a weak foundation will cost you everything. And we're reminded then of the pain of discipline or the pain of regret, right? As we're talking about wisdom.

We either experience those two things. We either experience the pain of discipline, and it's hard, or the pain of regret. And that's kind of the choices we're left with there.

But while we're starting into this Proverbs 14, I wanted to define wisdom for you. And I didn't just pull this out of a dictionary. I kind of thought about where we've been going so far in Proverbs.

And this is the definition I kind of thought about as I'm studying Proverbs 14. I define wisdom as making the right decision regardless of circumstances, feelings, or benefits. Let me say that again.

Making the right decision regardless of what the outcome is going to be. How it's going to affect our circumstances, our feelings, and the benefits. We make the right decision regardless.

It's the ability to discern between right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error, and then choose accordingly. That's what wisdom is. The ability to make the right decision.

Because we all know what knowledge is, right? I know it, but wisdom is actually doing it. And that's what he's going to talk about here throughout Proverbs 14. Wisdom versus folly.

Both. He's going back and forth. Wisdom or folly.

Wisdom or folly. So it begs the question, who wins? Who wins in our life? And that's really where we're going with this. So before I begin chapter 14, I want to mention we're going to be starting this, and you'll see it in the bulletins in the weeks to come.

We're going to start a fast. That's not a very popular word. Oh my Lord, Shane.

If you talk about prayer and fasting, you can just remove a lot of the audience because they do not want to come and hear about those two spiritual disciplines. But I've noticed that when we fast, what we're doing is we're fighting the flesh. You're putting the flesh in submission.

And wisdom and clarity actually become even more apparent. If you're having a hard time making the right decision or doing these things, the flesh a lot of times aids in deception. I know that's hard to believe, but our flesh helps us make wrong decisions.

That's why we make wrong decisions a lot of times, because we want to feed the flesh. So fasting kills the flesh temporarily and allows us to see more clearly. It's not difficult.

I mean, it's not easy. It's very difficult. It's one of the most difficult things you'll ever do.

A spiritual discipline might say, oh my gosh, who wants to do that? Well, we're going to get into that because fasting is throughout the entire Bible, Old Testament and New Testament. Jesus assumed that people would fast. So we're going to be talking about that.

We're going to be starting a Daniel fast. But there's also different kinds of fast. What I like to do is look at what is a stronghold in your life right now.

Look at what you know is feeding the flesh. That is what we're going to fast from, whether it's media, alcohol, caffeine. You fill in the blanks.

A big bowl of chocolate ice cream at night every single night. Those are the things. And to be honest with you, fasting in the Bible was really not eating anything.

We've kind of tailored it a little bit so it doesn't hurt as bad. Let me just do this and this and this. Then I can still eat at every meal.

I just will eat more healthier. So if you really want to get serious about fasting, it means nothing. Try going a day or two without food, just juice.

It's very, very difficult. But talk about the clarity and how you can feel closer to God. It doesn't make sense.

The reason it makes sense is because you're starving the flesh. Remember how we learned that the flesh says, Feed me so I can destroy you. That's what our flesh says.

Feed me more and more so I can destroy you. So fasting helps us put that aside. And actually we tell the flesh, You're in submission to me.

You submit to me, flesh. I don't submit to you. But a lot of times we walk around the opposite of that.

Our flesh controls us. Right? Remember I told you how difficult it is for me to pass by Panda Express every Saturday night when I leave here. It's like, oh, I'm already thinking about it.

So I just have to hit the gas and go. Because the flesh is pulling me in that direction. Now some of these things obviously aren't bad.

We talk about the lust of the flesh. Obviously you've got to eat. You've got to drink.

So some of these things aren't necessarily bad. But what happens is when it begins to control you, when the flesh begins to control and these impulses, these desires begin to control us. So in a nutshell, that's all fasting is.

You're putting that aside and you're focusing more on God's Word and spiritual things. So we're going to start that. That will help bring clarity.

If you guys are wanting to know God's will in your life, you're having some issues, you're praying through, there's nothing better you can do than fast and seek God because He honors that. It's not something that will go unrewarded for sure. So with that said, do you have your Bibles? Proverbs 14.

I'm going to be reading from the New King James Version of the Bible. And as usual, I've got a lot to say and not a lot of time to say it. So there's so much in this chapter I don't want to discount it.

Verse 1, The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish woman pulls it down with her hands. He who walks in his uprightness fears the Lord, but he who is perverse in his ways despises him. In the mouth of a fool is a rod of pride, but the lips of the wise will preserve him or them.

Now, instead of pulling all that apart, in a nutshell what they're saying there is he's contrasting wisdom and folly. He's saying wisdom builds up, folly tears down. Wisdom builds up and folly tears down.

I find it interesting that he starts by saying the wise woman builds her house, but the foolish woman pulls it down with her own hands. Well, where's the man at in there? Well, obviously he's responsible too. But what we found and what you've noticed is a lot of times the home is where the woman spends the majority of the time more than the man as far as cooking and helping and nurturing.

And that's kind of her castle, I guess, if you want to put it that way. So what she can easily do is pull that down by her words, by her actions, by her lifestyle, that she can pull it down. So wisdom says you don't pull down your house, you build it up.

So one good way to look at are we using wisdom or are we using folly? What comes out of our mouth? What do our actions say? And again, if you haven't been here before, I'm preaching to myself as well, not just you, not pointing fingers, all of us. Do we build each other up or do we pull each other down, especially our own house? So wisdom builds up, folly tears down. Wisdom fears the Lord, folly despises His word.

Wisdom considers His words carefully, and folly does not. That's what he says here in verse 3, The mouth of a fool is like a rod of pride, but the lips of the wise will preserve them. So in other words, we've talked about this before, so I don't want to belabor the point, considering our words carefully because they carry weight.

And a wise person knows when to do this, say nothing. But what does a fool like to do? Shoot off emails, shoot off text messages. Basically, a foolish person is reactionary.

You've upset me, now I'm going to react. I want to say this, I want to say this. They're reactionary, they're foolish.

They don't measure their words. I've been guilty of this many times. So have some of you, I'm sure.

We respond, I'm sorry, we react, we don't respond. And that's what folly does. You shoot back, shoot back, shoot back, shoot back.

So the next time, that's what I've told you before, and I'll tell you again, I'll probably tell you again in a few months. Before you send that email, sleep on it. If you can.

That mean email, that mean text, responding, reacting right back, sleep on it. Tell me if you don't feel a little bit different in the morning. You're like, oh, I'm so glad I didn't send that.

That's what wisdom does. Wisdom steps back, it weighs the consequences, and it responds accordingly. And that's what he's saying here.

The foolish people do not do that. Verse 4, this has been a confusing verse to many people, so I hope to bring a little bit of clarity to it. Verse 4, where no oxen are, the trough is clean.

But much increase comes by the strength of an ox. Any ideas out there? Well, let's read it slowly. There's a couple different thoughts on this.

Where no oxen are, the trough is clean. So obviously if there's no oxen, which back then was very important for anything from pulling loads to removing tree stumps to tilling the soil to everything. Everything was done by oxen and mule, and that's why you'll hear about being yoked together, these big yokes that they would wear that they could pull more of the load together.

Now, if you have no oxen, your trough is clean, meaning there's no need for food in the trough. However, there's another meaning, where there's no oxen, the stall is clean as well. So it's like, wow, have you ever tried to clean up after animals like that? I mean, it's a mess.

So he's saying, listen, where you have no oxen, great, your trough is clean. You saved a little money in wheat and barley. You saved a little bit of money.

And you don't have to clean that dirty stall. Oh, thank goodness. You don't have to get the rake and the shovels.

So if there's no oxen there, you're good. You don't have to clean, and it didn't cost you a lot of money. However, the last half of the verse brings it into context.

But much increase comes by the strength of that ox. So yeah, it costs money to feed the ox, but the cost of that offsets the profit you make from the hardworking ox. And yes, it's difficult to clean the stall, but the produce and what the ox produces is worth it.

So basically, he's saying here, and I put it in your notes, we must make an investment. The cost to purchase the ox, the cost to feed the ox, and the time to clean to get a larger return. So you might say, what in the world does that have to do with us today? Well, let's take out the word ox there.

We must make an investment to get a larger return. And he's going to talk later on about working hard. And all labor there is profit.

You know it's biblical to work hard? And that's one of my beasts. I'm not going to bring it up again. It's with the direction of some of our government officials is to not reward hard work, but to just let everybody kind of reward poverty.

Now granted, there's people that need that, absolutely. And I'm not going to make this whole point again, but it's applicable to proverbs. Is we have to be very careful.

We need to help those who need help, but we also need to help those get to work who need to work. That's what he's saying here. Yes, it's difficult, but it's worth it because the investment is going to come around and help you in the long run.

So in a nutshell, many people don't do anything because it's too difficult. I'm not going to do that. It's too difficult.

I'm not going to go out and work. It's too difficult. And we always try to find the easy way around, don't we? I mean, if somebody just paid all our bills, how many of us would just stay at home and watch TV? What's going on with Oprah? And lay around the house.

Why? I've got all this money coming in. See, the flesh wants to not work because it's difficult. So it's a biblical principle to work hard.

I'm going to get into that in a minute. Verse 5, a faithful witness does not lie. A faithful witness does not lie, but a false witness will utter lies.

A scoffer seeks wisdom and does not find it. Let's stop there for a minute. A scoffer.

You know what the Bible talks about a scoffer? The one who scoffs at God. Scoffs at God's work. You see that everywhere now.

Scoffing at Christianity. Scoffing at God's Word. Scoffing.

Oh, you Christians this, you Christians that. You're going to actually see Christians pretty soon get marginalized. Thank God this guy in Connecticut didn't say he was a Christian and was listening to God,

because that's all they need, trust me, to start marginalizing and scoffing at this group who believe on the name of Christ.

And what happens is, that scoffer, it says here, he seeks wisdom and does not find it. So a person who's scoffing, they actually seek wisdom, but they don't find it. You might say, well, that doesn't make any sense.

Well, do you remember when Jesus said, strive to enter the narrow gate? For many will seek. They'll seek to enter, but they will not be able to. What? It's the same thing.

The scoffer seeks wisdom. Now, you have to understand that word seek there, whether it's in the Old Testament Hebrew or the New Testament Greek. It means to ponder, or to think about, or to consider, or to dabble in.

So the scoffer, he dabbles in wisdom, he seeks, he ponders it, he thinks about it, he contemplates it. Yeah, yeah, yeah, I think so. But he doesn't submit to it.

You see the difference there? Most atheists I have talked to or agnostics that I have debated, personally, one-on-one, they've considered God. They've dabbled in it. They've pondered it.

They've read a few Bible verses. Let me see what you Christians believe. So that's what that word seeking there means.

I'll consider it. Sure, Shane, I'll consider it. I'll think about it.

I'll ponder it. But they don't repent and believe in Christ. They don't break under the weight of their sin and turn to God.

They seek in that regard. They ponder it and they contemplate it. So that's basically what he's saying here.

Even a scoffer will seek wisdom, but they won't find it because they don't want to submit to it. Here's the difference. A scoffer, somebody rejecting God's Word, says, okay, I'll read a little Bible verse, blah, blah, blah, poke fun at your this and your nativity scene at Christmas, and they seek.

But the person who truly surrenders and submits their lives finds wisdom. God says, if you seek Me, you'll find Me. So it's always an issue of the heart.

Does the heart seek after God? Truly seek after Him? Or are they just like the scoffer here, not really wanting to find it? But knowledge is easy to him who understands. And basically saying, but knowledge is easy to him who willingly opens up his heart to God. That's what he's saying there.

Now let me take an encouragement break here and just encourage you, because a lot of times this stuff can seem pretty weighty, pretty heavy. I can never measure up. And I would hate people to not come to church just because they feel convicted and every week, and I can never measure up and it's too hard.

The Christian life is impossible. It's impossible. Stop trying to follow rules and measure up and do this.

It's impossible. It's absolutely impossible. That's why we're told to submit, surrender, be empty vessels that God can use.

Let the Holy Spirit work in your life. Don't try to follow all these rules and come in here with some checklist and being beat up all the time. So be encouraged.

The reason a lot of these things are difficult is because God's saying, let Me take over. Please, let Me take over. You have a problem with your mouth and your words? Scoffer, let Me take over.

Belittling other people, pulling down your house? Let Me take over. Please, just surrender, submit, repent. Let Me take over.

So that's the encouraging thing. We're not supposed to do this in our own strength and our own flesh. That's what the filling of the Holy Spirit is all about.

Emptying ourselves so we can be filled with the Spirit of God so He can work. Verse 7, Go from the presence of a foolish man when you do not perceive in him the lips of knowledge. This is amazing.

He's saying, when you perceive that somebody's a fool, leave them. Don't become friends with them, that's for sure. Don't ask them for advice, that's for sure.

When you perceive in them there is foolishness, walk away. The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way, but the folly of fools is deceit. Now, I couldn't find a better definition than this on this verse.

The New American Commentary says, One should evaluate what a person says on the basis of his or her overall credibility. Listen up. Here we go.

This is important. One should not expect to get sound advice from a person who shows no respect for the precepts of wisdom. In short, the character of the speaker serves as a warning about whether his or her words are true or wise.

The character of the person. A lot of times we go to people who have no character for wisdom and guidance. If you're wanting somebody to speak into your life, look at their character.

And I'm not just talking about people who aren't living for Christ. I'm even talking about legalistic, rigid Pharisees. The Christianese, they say all the right things, but they're just as bitter as can be.

They're just as arrogant and negative. You go look to them for advice? Look at their character. Look at their heart.

When you perceive in them foolishness, the Bible says walk the other direction. It's better not to get any counsel at all than to get the wrong counsel. We better remember that one tonight.

It is better to get no counsel whatsoever, because you can get the counsel of God through His Word, than bad counsel. And I have seen bad counsel ruin more marriages, families, business deals, ministry, than almost anything else. Somebody told me this.

And we have to be very careful, because a lot of times we want to gravitate towards people who would tell me what I want to hear. I want to go and talk to these people because they're telling me what I want to hear. I'm avoiding these people because they don't tell me what I want to hear.

And a lot of times it's not what we want to hear, that's biblical counsel, telling people what they need to hear. So I'm just throwing it out to be very, very, very careful. Think about your life right now.

Who are you going to for advice about a certain thing? Who's speaking into your life? Because we don't realize it, but people influence us one way or the other. Are they broken, humble men in God that truly want to see the body built up? Or are they negative, gossiping, pulling the church down? And they will influence us. You want to know why? Because they've influenced me.

Because misery loves company. And what happens is, we get down on something. We talk to other people and they get down on it.

And then we have our own little group here that we call just the three or four of us because we see this negativity together. Doesn't this feel comfortable? It's confirming my feelings. It feels so good over here.

But God's Word says, look at their character, and if you perceive in them that there is foolishness, get out of the way. Get out of the picture. Then Psalms 1-1 makes a lot more sense.

Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly. Psalms 1-1. Check it out tonight.

Blessed is the man or woman who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. And I think sometimes we forget that because we feel independent, especially in America. Rebellious, independent people that can get it done.

But we are influenced more by other people than we realize. I can look at who a person hangs out with and associates with, and I can tell you their character and what direction it's going. I've got to be careful of this myself.

You get around a bunch of negative people that just want to put the church down, I'll be going in that direction too. And we have to remember that the church is the bride of Christ. And we need to be very careful how we speak about Jesus' bride.

So I don't take things lightly when I chastise a church. I'm often also reminded of Revelation 1, 2, and 3 when Jesus really took the churches to task that were not walking the way they should have walked. So we have to be very careful there.

So that's just the item in commentary on verse 7. More than I had in my notes. Just be careful who you're allowing to speak into your life. And I want to talk here about credibility and character.

I don't know if this is for anybody, but I wrote down some examples to consider that I considered in my own life when I'm thinking about my character. I wrote these down for my benefit, and maybe it'll be a blessing to you as well. First of all, do you give back to people? Are you honest and trustworthy? Do you speak highly of others? Especially those above you or those in competition with you? And my example would be other churches.

Do we allow integrity to guide us? And are we disciplined or lazy and complacent? Do we manipulate in slander or do we compliment? If you can just remember those things right there, that'll help you keep the course on godly character and wisdom. Right there, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth is going to speak. Watch it, because we can become fools according to the Bible standard.

Verse 9, fools mock at sin, but among the upright there is favor. A foolish person mocks at sin. And as we all know, how we view sin reveals our heart.

Doesn't it? How we view sin reveals our heart. Do we believe in there is a God? Or do we believe that there's not a God? Or sin in our own lives. How do we view sin? Is it, ah, no big deal? Or do we see it as God sees it? That's what he's saying here.

A foolish person just mocks at sin. Oh, it's no big deal. I was raised this way.

Fill in the blank. They mock at sin. Verse 10, the heart knows its own bitterness, and a stranger does not share its joy.

And I obviously thought of Connecticut during thinking about this. Verse 10, the heart knows its own bitterness. No one understands your pain and your joy but God.

And you really don't realize how significant that is until actually when I planted, me and my wife decided to plant this church, and we've seen all the different dynamics that take place. And I started to realize, and I mentioned this to you too, Randy, in the past. One of the hardest things for me about pastoring, about trying to lead a church is this point.

No one understands your pain and your joy, of course. But no one understands your pain but God. And I encourage people all the time to go to Him, because the church will let you down every single time.

I remember one guy, when we first started, and my mom's went by his house. I've written letters. He was going here for a few months right when we started two years ago.

I've never shared this story before because it's not really something you're proud of, because it's not really our fault. I'm just trying to tell you how these things work. But in the first two or three months of the church starting, his mother passed away.

And nobody from the church called. Nobody went by. Nobody went to the funeral.

And he never came again, and rightly so. So I knew somebody that knew him. I said, where's he been? And they said his mom passed.

And I'm like, I didn't even know. I talked to my mom. She goes, nobody knew.

So that was, it hurt for a while because his impression of the church is not correct. We didn't even know. I would have been there.

And I've seen a lot of people kind of walk away over the year. The last couple of years just kind of drift away. And you weren't there for me.

And I'm reminded the church is not the answer. Christ is. We will let you down every single time.

That's why I want to point people to Christ. He will never let you down. The church always will let you down.

That's the key, the answer. Because people I know sometimes are going through a divorce and things challenging and they're here for a little while and then they just leave because they didn't receive everything they thought they would have received. And say, that's right, we're sinful, fallen people trying to get through life together.

Go to Christ. Don't rely on me, please. I will let you down every single opportunity my flesh has given.

I will die trying and I will pray that I won't, but please don't put me on the pedestal. Don't put this church on the pedestal. Put Christ and Him alone.

That's who you look to. So that's why when I counsel people, I say, look to Him. No, don't you have nuggets for me and can't I text you every hour? No, don't look to me.

Look to Christ. And I see that all the time. People drift and they leave.

What happened? Well, you just weren't there for me. I'm not even there for my own kids. No, I'm getting serious.

I have kids that I need to spend time with. I've got family members I haven't seen for months. Me and my mom haven't had lunch in six months.

And I'm tired of people saying, you weren't there for me. I have people closer than I'm not there for either. And I'm put on this pedestal and it hurts after a lot of times because you weren't there for me.

You didn't get right back to me. You didn't call me. You didn't meet with me every single week.

I didn't know. I'm barely getting through life myself. Who am I supposed to talk to? Who can I call? Who's going to mentor me? Who can I call and spill out my thoughts and my feelings and my hardships? I can't.

So, I just see this so much that I just want... You know, I'm trying to get this point across. And hopefully it's coming across. You have to look to Christ.

And people don't understand when I went through the most difficult time of my life in 1998, 1999, I didn't have mentors and people I could call all the time. You know what I had to do? Shut off the lights, lock the door, and get on worship music and the Word of God and allow the Holy Spirit to change me and break me and shape me. And then I come out of there.

Now I come out of there relying on God and not some man who's going to drop the ball. You see the difference? We put too much weight into people and people... Will you be there for me? Will you call me? Will you hold me accountable? I can't even hold myself accountable. Look to Christ.

He is the only sure foundation. He's the only rock that will never leave you, never forsake you. There at 2 in the morning, He will return every text, every email.

He won't forget anything. But that's what He's saying here. The heart knows its own bitterness.

And we don't at the church. So on one hand, don't put the church on such a pedestal that they're going to meet your every need because they won't. My job is to point you to Christ and get out of the way actually.

I don't want to be their accountability partner and be a person's lifeline. I can't be a lifeline. Some weeks I need a lifeline.

So we're all trying to find the guy who holds the lifeline. And it just happened again this week where there's a guy we haven't seen in a long time who doesn't return calls anymore. And I know it has to do with we couldn't be there for him at every single time.

And it's like they want somebody to go through life holding hands with them and keep them. And that's okay. But just don't rely on that.

You see my point? Counseling is good. Mentoring is good. Being there for people is great.

Taking phone calls. All that is wonderful. But people put too much emphasis on that so when the church lets you down, you bail out.

You never look at man. You look at Christ. So when somebody says the church has let me down, I say absolutely.

Never, never look at man. Look at Christ. And all these public leaders falling from ministry, falling, falling, falling.

They say, don't you get discouraged? I'm like, a little bit, but I'm looking to Him. I expect that from those people, especially if they're not in the Word. They're not broken.

They're not humble. There's no accountability. They've lost their devotional life and they've become an idol.

In Christianity, they're going to fall. That's why I look at the real idol. And look to Him and Him alone.

So just remember that. None of that is in these notes. I'm hoping that meant something to somebody because I've just seen it so many times.

And it actually drains a lot of my energy because there's something amiss here. How am I going to meet the needs of all these people? How is Shane going to be able to do this? You're not getting back. And my mom.

I've sent people to her for counseling and they don't come back for a second time because she told them what they wanted to hear. Don't tell me I should work this out. Don't tell me I should do this.

I'm not coming back anymore because they heard something they didn't like. But if we can't tell the truth in the Bible, where do we tell it from? So we have to remember that. No one understands your pain but God.

It's right here. Proverbs 14.10 The heart knows its own bitterness, and a stranger does not share the bitterness or the joy. Nobody knows you like God does.

So turn to Him and Him alone. Verse 11 The house of the wicked will be overthrown, but the tent of the upright will flourish. Verse 12 There is a way that seems right to a man.

Uh oh. Here we go again. There is a way that seems right to a man.

It just feels right. Right? Here's what he's saying. There is a way that just feels right.

But in the end, it is a way of death. That's why wisdom is so important. Wisdom according to God's Word and the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

They're saying, hello, don't trust your feelings. You know that's not right. Don't trust those feelings.

So he's saying here, you know. Some ways seem right to man. It just feels right, but it leads to death.

Even in laughter, the heart may sorrow. In the end of mirth may be grief. The backslider in the heart will be filled with his own ways, but a good man will be satisfied from above.

The simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his steps. Alright, that's a lot to unpack. Let's start at the top.

It seems right. Life deceives you by appearances and by feelings. The whole job of the media and marketing is to deceive you by feelings and appearances.

If you could just drive this, you'd be set. If you just get on this diet, it's going to start right in a few weeks. Number one New Year's resolution out there.

Come on, everybody knows. Number one New Year's resolution. \$60 billion a year industry is a weight loss industry.

I can save you a lot of money. Don't go on a diet. Make lifestyle changes that last a life long.

I'm sorry. Make lifestyle changes that last a life long. You know what I'm saying.

I'm getting tongue tied here with all these notes. I'll save you a lot of money. Don't go on a diet.

30 pounds in 30 days. Guess what comes back in 60 days? It does. Whatever it takes to lose weight is what it's going to take to keep it off.

We are created to eat God-given food, not food from a man in a factory. It might take longer, but it's going to be done the right way in moderation. But they're going to deceive you by appearances.

You can look like this fitness model in 90 days. No, you can't, because she measures her food. She jogs 14 miles a day, and she lives cross-training weights, and she has no job because she lives at her parents' house and she works out three hours a day.

And she has a little scale that measures four ounces of turkey, 120 calories, my Ezekiel bread with another 100 calories. Maintaining all this stuff, you're not going to look like that, and I'm not going to look like the guy. Because that's obsession.

But we see that and go, oh my Lord. And you can just wear this belt and it just shakes and you're going to lose all this weight. That makes no sense.

What are they doing though? They're deceiving by appearances and feelings. If I can get their feelings and appear, look at how this is going to look. That's the whole plan of the diet industry.

They know your return. We're return customers. It's coming back again and coming back again and coming back again.

So don't spend any money. C.N. Usher. My first book was What Works When Diets Don't.

We've got free copies. This is What Works When Diets Don't. A biblical approach.

I know January 1st is going to be this time and everybody's going to be hitting this and they're going to be upset and they're going to be disappointed because wrong focus as well. Make sure it's not a full-blown obsession. I'm going way off on these things.

The next verse I want to get to. Even in laughter, just because one laughs doesn't mean that they are happy. Do you know that comedians are the most miserable people on the planet? I remember Jim Carrey

had an interview a few years back.

Miserable. But you see, a lot of these people, the backslider, it says, the backslider in heart is filled with his own ways, but also they have to appear happy so the real them doesn't come out. If we're laughing all the time, people are always joking, always laughing, they're dying inside.

And the laughter sometimes, they use to cover up that pain. Then the next verse, the simple believes every single word, but the prudent, which is the wise person, the diligent person, considers well his steps. Okay? He's saying right here, fools believe every word.

Right? So it's like walk off that cliff. Okay. Whoa, he doesn't even look.

I'm scaring everybody. But the prudent person, what does he do? There's a step there. There's another step.

It's methodical. It's thought out. They don't just believe everything.

It goes back to again, January 1st, the weight loss thing. They just believe everything and buy everything and spend a thousand dollars and all this stuff. The prudent person, the wise person, does not believe every word.

So be careful when you allow people to bring you into marketing schemes and bringing you into this way and this way and this ministry and that ministry. I get lots of letters from people, you should do this, and there's a prophecy saying, oh yeah, do you know the world's ending in six days? Is that what it is? Six days. Okay.

The simple believes every word. I hope it doesn't because I'm preaching the next day and the Christmas message is coming along well. No man knows the day or the hour.

I mean, I had a lady stop me this week. She was frantic. Like, if you've been following, do you know what's going on? And she says she's a Christian.

And I said, yeah, I know, the Mayan and the other different things. And she went, what's going on? And you start to talk to them. I said, where are you getting your information from? YouTube, YouTube.

Anyplace? Yeah, just type it in. Be careful who you listen to out there. There's YouTube video clips that called John MacArthur a false teacher and Billy Graham a false prophet and all these YouTube clips.

I'm sure I'll be on that list someday too just because somebody who's bored who has nothing to do wants to go on YouTube and say all these things. And guess what? A lot of people believe that. The prudent, the foolish believe every word, everything you hear, they believe it.

I've had people send me, you've got to watch this, our own government took down the Twin Towers. I'm not even going to touch that with a 10-foot pole because everything that would have to happen for that to actually happen is not even possible, number one. Number two is, be careful who you listen to.

You're being led astray by all these little things that are deceptive at its core. Everything, they believe everything. So you have to ask yourself, wisdom versus folly, who wins? Who's winning in your life right now? Wisdom or folly? What I like about this kind of stuff is you can make the decision tonight to change that course.

Man, a lot of this is convicting me. Good, God says come back to Me. Come back to Me.

And I will be there for you. Verse 16, a wise man fears and departs from evil, but a fool rages and is self-confident. A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, and a man of wicked intentions is hated.

In a nutshell, fools are reckless, hot-headed, and reactionary. But a wise person stays out of trouble. They're cautious and they're calm.

I like what Abraham Lincoln said here. It's better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak out and remove all doubt. There's a lot of wisdom there.

Be careful before you speak. A wise man fears and departs from evil, and his words are seasoned with grace. Verse 18, the simple inherit folly.

That's their children. Somebody who's foolish, they just produce folly. But the prudent person are crowned with knowledge.

The evil will bow before the good and the wicked at the gates of the righteous. Basically, the principle here is reaping what we're sowing. God is not mocked.

Whatever man sows, that will he reap. He'll inherit. In other words, what we're sowing is going to come back later.

It's a biblical principle. There's no getting around it. Whether it's financially, relationally with our words, what we sow is what we're going to reap later.

Verse 20, I've got to go fast or I'm not going to get through this. The poor man is hated even by his own neighbor, but the rich has many friends. At first, you might say, well, that doesn't make sense.

Well, sure it does. It seems to indicate that this is poverty from folly. See, it's been consistent.

Folly does this. Folly, folly, folly. So he's saying the poor man is hated even by his own neighbor, but the rich has many friends.

So this seems to indicate that there's poverty from folly. Poverty from laziness. And he who despises his neighbor sins, but he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he.

Verse 22, Do they not go astray who devise evil? Yes, they do go astray. But mercy and truth belong to those who devise good. Verse 23, In all labor there is profit.

Let's all say that. In all labor there is profit. In all labor? Yeah, in all labor.

Sometimes it doesn't look like it. Right? We're doing all this work. But in all labor there is profit because God will bless that hardworking spirit.

I often tell people all the time they're looking for a job, go out and do something. Anything. Volunteer at the church, at the shelter, whatever.

Do something because God will bless that labor. Many times He opens doors based on our stepping out in faith and working hard. Not just sitting at home.

My application hasn't been seen in two years and I haven't had a job. Go out and do something. God will bless that.

In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter leads only to poverty. Just sit around and talk about it. I'm done talking about it.

It's time to do it. They sit around talking, talking, talking. God will bless a hardworking spirit.

Verse 24, The crown of the wise is their riches. Again, from hard work. But the foolishness of fools is folly.

And again, He's talking about this whole thing. I don't want to get back into it with the government and things, but God blesses hard work and discipline. And I often think of this.

Hard times people need help, but if somebody's lazy, then they need to go and work. You see the difference there? If somebody's poor, you have to say, are they falling on hard times because the church needs to help? End of story. It's not even debatable.

But if they're poor because of laziness, then the Bible says they need to work. But see what we do is, let's get out the wallet. Everybody, blanket, blanket, blanket approach.

Just cover everybody. We need to separate. We need to help those who need help.

And we haven't been doing a good job of it. That's probably why the government feels they have to step in. The church has dropped the ball.

We have not done a good job of helping those who need help. But the other side of the coin is, we shouldn't help those who can get to work and build, because God will bless them. That's biblical.

They'll build self-esteem, hard work ethic, and helping these people get to work and find a job. So you see the distinction there. You can't just group everybody that they would consider poor into this one group that everybody needs our help.

Some do and some don't. Some need to get out and work and follow this biblical principle. So that's why it's a difficult thing for the church.

I'm just throwing it out there. That's why it's like turning around the Titanic. Hey, there's an iceberg.

Can we turn around? No. I mean, that's where the direction with the nation, it's hard to turn this whole thing around. But that's because many years ago we went astray on biblical principles.

Now we're reaping what we've sowed. And it's hard to get out of that because a lot of people genuinely need help, but a lot of other people genuinely need to find a job and get to work. So you see the difference there? And that's why that's difficult.

Verse 25, a true witness delivers souls, but a deceitful witness speaks lies. I think that's pretty self-explanatory. A true witness will deliver souls, but a deceitful witness speaks lies.

And you'll see throughout the Bible that they hired scoundrels or false witnesses to come against Jesus and other people. But a true witness will deliver that soul. Verse 26, in the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge.

The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life to turn away from the snares of death. You want to know what our hope is for our nation? Not gun control, folks. The fear of the Lord.

The fear of the Lord. That's what the problem is. When a nation or a people fear the Lord, they live differently.

You live much differently when you fear the Lord. This isn't being scared and backing down. This is a reverent respect for God and His Word.

When you live fearing the Lord, you make different decisions, different choices. That is the hope for our nation. That's why we have to preach with boldness and clarity back to God's Word and put the fear of the Lord back in people.

That's a good thing. Because what we're seeing today and what you're going to see in the news in the future is because these people have no fear of the Lord. Period.

And on that note, I'm going to play a short clip. It's only two minutes long. And then I'm going to end this.

This lady wants to get rid of her husband. She says he's a rat. All he has to do is drop one tablet of arsenic into his coffee when he's not looking.

You will get away with it. You'll not get caught. And she'll give you \$10 million cash.

Would you do it? Yes. What about you? Do it for free. Don't count it out.

No, I would. I called my buddy Ronnie to do it for \$20, and I'll take the rest. Would you do it? No.

Everyone has their price, so yes. You'd kill him? Yes. You seem tempted.

I mean, \$10 million is a lot of money, and I like money. For \$10 million, you'd become a murderer. For \$10 million, he'd become dead.

Would you do it for \$5? Yes, of course. \$1 million? Yes. So you'd murder someone for \$1 million? Yes.

Well, let's say she says she'll double it to \$20 million. That's going to set you up for life. That's a very rich man.

Would you do it? I'd do it. \$20 million? Yeah. Somebody offered me \$20 million to kill somebody, and I was never going to get caught.

I probably would do it. I mean, who wouldn't? I wouldn't. Well, I guess you have morals, and I don't, right? Most definitely.

You would do it? Yes. You wouldn't hesitate? No. I'm thinking about it right now.

I wouldn't think about it any later. I'd do it. Would you do it? Yes.

Would you do it? Yes, I would. You'd murder for \$10 million? Yeah. I don't know the guy.

And he's a rat, apparently, so why not? Let's say she's lying. Not my problem. Just give me the money.

What about you? Yep. OK, no hesitation. So you'd murder an innocent man? Yeah, why not? Most definitely.

I'd do it. Yes. I'd do it for free.

Yes, I would. Yep. Yes.

Yes. There's your culture, folks. Man-on-the-street interviews.

There's no fear of the Lord in the land. I mean, if that isn't a wake-up call, I don't know what is. And it's going to get more perverted and more perverted.

That's why we need to fast, and we need to pray like never before. This is who's out there. Now, on a positive note, I encourage you to watch this whole movie.

It's only 30 minutes long. With Ray Comfort. I believe it's called The Genius Movie, or something like that.

The Genius Movie. Or email me and I'll send you the whole thing. The encouraging thing is he asked other people, and they said absolutely not.

No way. Not for \$100 million. What was the one defining difference? One thing.

Fear of God versus no fear of God. That's the difference. Remember that guy who said you must have morals then.

Oh, absolutely. That's the only thing I want to leave you with that point on this is the fear of the Lord is the only hope for this nation. And we need to turn back to God.

But I don't want to leave you guys discouraged because the good news about all this is the Gospel, the hope, and the redemption. You might say, oh, this is terrible. But there is great hope.

There is redemption. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. As far as the East is from the West, I have removed your sins from you, but you must call on my name.

You must repent of your sin. You must turn to me. That's why the Bible says hard is the way of the transgressor.

We learned that in Proverbs 13, I believe it was. Hard is the way of the transgressor. Those people who are transgressing against God, life is very challenging.

Life is very difficult. So I don't want to end on a negative note. I want to end on a very hopeful note with what's going on with Connecticut, with all these different things.

There is great hope and there is great peace. We live in a very blessed nation. God is moving.

God can do mighty things. God is still on the throne. Mr. Obama works for Mr. God.

There is a hierarchy here. Our nation is still in God's hand. He holds our nation in His hand.

He raises up kings and He pulls another down. We need to pray for our president. We need to pray for our senators.

We need to pray for our nation. We need to turn off the TV for the love of God and get back in the prayer closet. That's how you'll see America change is when Christians start... When you see Christians start praying and petitioning and fasting, God moves.

He says, there's my people crying out for me. I will move. I will move on that nation.

I will move on that group of people. As Ashley and Chelsea come up and close, I just want to end on that note. Not to be discouraged.

A lot of this is... When I watched this video, I was getting really discouraged. But then you watch the other people who said, I would never do that because I have a fear of God. Most of them were Christians.

You see the difference there? That fear of God. And if you don't have that tonight, I would submit to you or who's going to hear it on the radio later or watching it on the internet. If you don't have that, tonight is a night where you can change all that.

God says, if you call on me, whoever calls on me, I will save them. That's all we have to do is call on the only name that saves. And I will save you from your destruction.

That's very powerful and very positive. It's not all negative stuff here. It's really positive.

If you look at what the gospel is, you know what the gospel, the definition of the gospel is? The good news. What's the good news? The bad news is you don't want to hear the bad news. The bad news is that without God, we're on a road to destruction.

That's why he says, call out to me and I will save you. I will redeem you. So with that said, let's close.

Dear Heavenly Father, I pray tonight. Lord, that if people don't know you tonight, Lord, or as this goes out on the radio and the internet or different media avenues, Lord, that you will convict by your Spirit right now those who need the fear of the Lord in their hearts. Lord, you would put it deep in their hearts that the hound of heaven will not let loose until they turn to you and surrender all.

Lord, I also pray, Lord, that you would bring us peace that surpasses all understanding that this event and what's going on in the news in Israel and throughout our nation, Lord, would not stir us to be afraid, but stir us to pray and to seek you, Lord. Use this to draw the church back to you. Lord, I pray that you would have your way in here tonight.

Lord, begin to restore marriages. Lord, bring the prodigal son home. Bring the wayward daughter home.

Lord, as parents are praying and pleading and petitioning, Lord, hear their prayers for their children. Lord, hear our prayers for our children that are so young yet that rebellion against you is not an option, Lord, but as they grow older, that they will have to make that choice, Lord. Would you shelter them now and protect them now? Lord, and protect our children and our churches from things like this that could be coming.

Lord, protect us. Have your angels look over us, dear Heavenly Father. I pray for the churches tomorrow.

Lord, from Lancaster Baptist and Central Christian to Vineyard and Highlands and Grace Chapel and Calvary Chapel, Lord, that you would just bless those churches and have the Spirit move mightily upon the pulpits that they would preach your truth and that people would be convicted and get the fear of you back in them. Lord, and we ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Video: https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/3B_kKpzTp8U.mp4
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