

Wisdom and the Fool
Ryan Patty / 11.22.2020 / Proverbs 12:1

Intro

Good morning Christ Community Church! I'm excited to preach God's Word to you this morning. Next week, Lord willing, Pastor Jeff will be starting our resilient series and so this week, like last, will be a stand alone. If you have your bibles or devices go ahead and turn to the book of Proverbs, chapter 12. And as you are turning there, think with me for a moment on someone you know that you would consider to be wise, they are a wise person in your eyes. Maybe a family member or close friend, a cherished grandparent even. What makes them wise? Why do you see them that way? Is it a specific answer they give to a deep question? Is it the way in which they communicate with family and friends. Is it that they don't try to hide behind doors and scare their wife (asking for a friend here)? Is it how they manage their finances or how they are prone to giving good advice? What is it that makes them wise in your mind?

Now think on the other side of the coin. Someone you know that is not wise, really they are the opposite of being wise, they are what the bible would call a fool. What makes them a fool? Why do you see them that way? Is it a wrong choice that they made, or a series of wrong choices? Do they speak out of turn often, putting their foot in their mouth so to speak? When they speak is it of no substance? Maybe they have a differing view on something than you do? What makes them a fool in your mind?

Well the book of Proverbs, and really the whole Bible, speaks to those descriptions. It has something in particular to say about what makes a person wise, or a fool, and therefore how our behavior can often reveal us to be a wise person, or a foolish person. And today we will look more closely at a verse from Proverbs that in part, provides a picture of what a wise person does and what the fool does.

Background

Because we are jumping into the middle of this book, allow me to provide a brief background. The book of Proverbs is wisdom literature, along with Ecclesiastes and Job. Proverbs seeks to inform the reader what wisdom would say

about a wide variety of topics, life, death, time, joy, youthfulness, maturity, husbands and wives, children and parents, the list goes on; the book has much to say on a variety of issues. Predominantly written by Solomon, Chapters 1-9 are considered the prologue of the book (taking the tone of a father to a son, it appeals to those in their youth to pursue after lady wisdom, not lady folly), then in chapters 10-22 we have the sayings of Solomon (the actual couplet sayings that provide a contrast that we are used to (and often these themes are repeated in various ways), and lastly from 22:17 to the end of the book we have various other sayings of the wise.

And while tons of themes are found throughout Proverbs, I want to focus on the sayings of Solomon, specifically chapter 12. Proverbs, distilled down, presents us with a choice. Folly or wisdom. Foolish things of the world, or the spectacular things of God. Ears that refuse to listen or ones that are open to knowing the things of God. Darkened minds or eyes that see. I could continue on with the contrasts but you get it. Folly or wisdom.

So let us read our verse for today:

Proverbs chapter 12:1 -

“Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,
but one who hates correction is stupid.”

I have a feeling that you probably haven't heard the word stupid in a sermon as much as you will today, but nonetheless, we need to see what is happening here. The pastors and elders of CCC feel strongly that Christ is to be preached from all of Scripture and my goal this morning is for us to heed the wisdom found in this verse, and to see how our need for this wisdom points us to Jesus Christ, who as Paul says in 1 Cor. 1:24 is the very “power of God and the wisdom of God.”

Let's pray.

There are four things we need to see and meditate on from this passage. I'm going to structure our points to correspond, to the way they are paired in this particular verse. They are:

- 1) Learn to love discipline
- 2) Invite correction into your life
- 3) Know God deeply
- 4) Don't be stupid (I couldn't not have this point, right?)

1. Learn to love discipline

- A. Our text reads, “whoever loves discipline.” The first word of the proverb opens the door and invites us all to pursue wisdom. Whoever. Whoever you are, hearing these words right now. There is something that God through his Word wants to say to you. Whoever loves discipline. Well he invited so many of us with the first word and then he closed the door on so many with the next two words. Who of us loves discipline?
- B. So the question comes, what does this word discipline mean? The Hebrew word here (musar) means to discipline, to instruct, to correct. It implies someone or something bringing about an intended change in someone else. This can look like moral correction, where what you say and do is not lining up with Scripture, or it can even be theological correction. What you are thinking and saying about God is not true. The point is that your actions are not lining up with the way of wisdom, that is God’s way of living. We need correction because this side of eternity we mess up, and therefore are always growing into the image of Christ, but will not see a life free from sin until He makes all things perfect again.
- a. So this discipline can come from God, through you reading his word or hearing it preached or taught, it can come from a close friend or mentor as they gently and lovingly point out areas of growth in our lives, it can come from your spouse or mom or dad, or surprisingly even the subtle reminders from our kids. Discipline, that is correction in our life, the process of being sanctified to look more like Jesus, comes from a variety of channels, but that statement I just said (To Look LIKE JESUS) should be how we check this discipline, “Are they pointing out somewhere that I am not following after or behaving like my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?” **God and His Word are the foundation of all correction and discipline in our life.**
- C. And notice what the text says about it, whoever LOVES it. How strong is that word?! It’s not whoever likes some of the discipline, it’s not whoever accepts some of the discipline, or whoever listens to some of the discipline but whoever loves this discipline. There is an activeness to this. They pursue correction in their life because they know it helps them to look more like Jesus. It is active. Love does certain things. Love seeks things out, love listens and acknowledges and causes us to do as Paul says in 2 Cor. 13:5 “Examine yourselves.” Love does certain things. Part of your sanctification is you take a responsibility in it.
- D. And part of this loving is recognizing that this discipline promotes our holiness and is for our good.

- a. My son, do not take the Lord's discipline lightly or lose heart when you are reprov'd by him, 6 for the Lord disciplines the one he loves and punishes every son he receives. Hebrews 12:5b-6
 - b. 11 No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. - Hebrews 12:5a-11
 - i. The Lord disciplines those he loves. And the opposite is something to think about deeply. If there is an absence of correction and discipline in your life (whether it be from God's Word, from His Spirit, or by his people), then how are you sharing in the pursuit of holiness? If God's word isn't actively changing you, if you don't have people speaking into your life that can shape and sharpen you, then one could argue that there is an absence of discipline. Maybe your growth is being stunted.
- E. And the truth of the matter concerning loving discipline is this: *loving discipline does not come naturally.*
- a. Our sinful hearts hate it if we are being honest. We in our sin are often like the second line of this proverb and are a fool because we don't want to hear the discipline. We resonate with what the King of Israel said about the prophet Micaiah in 1 Kings 22 - "I hate him because he never prophesies good about me."
 - b. We don't want to hear from our wife or our husband how we could better sacrificially love them, instead we want to tell them how they could better love us. We don't want to hear from an older person or a younger person about an area of sinfulness they notice in our lives, they just need to remove the plank from their own eye first we can say. We naturally do not like it, but hear me here, this is a vital part of our Christian walk. We will be disciplined. By God and by others, and we need to learn to love it. Again, this learning to love comes about because you recognize the intended end result. It doesn't mean you will always enjoy it or like it, (Hebrews said it is painful!) but you learn to appreciate it for the benefit it is to you. This leads us to our second point, a kind of subpoint of the first one.

2) Invite correction into your life

- Those who love discipline are to be contrasted with those who do not.
- “But one who hates correction..”
- Just as we looked at the use of the word “loves” in the first line, so we need to underscore what it means to “hate” here in the second line. This implies an active disdain for someone speaking into your life. A willful refusal to see the truth of what they are saying. It doesn’t say the one who just doesn’t listen or the one who ignores but the one who has a hateful disposition towards correction and discipline is stupid. You show yourself to be a fool.
- And as I said before, a vital part of our Christian life is the community of the church. A large part of your sanctification comes from living life on life with one another. Both by being corrected and through the opportunity to correct others in discipleship. Don’t miss out on this! I realize the focus is on how we receive it, but there is a blessing for the one who is able to be used in the discipline of another just as well. These go together. It is how we practice the “one another” passages found throughout the NT, such as:
 - Love one another (Jn 13:34) occurs at least 16 more times
 - Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10)
 - Build up one another (Romans 14:19)
 - Admonish one another (Col. 3:16)
 - Speak to one another with Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19)
 - Submit to one another (1 Peter 5:5)
 - Encourage one another (1 Thess. 5:11)
 - And the list goes on. The primary way in which we practice the “one-anothers,” including being taught, being corrected, being disciplined, is through the local church and the community that we are called to be a part of.
- A. The very idea of this discipline and correction is that it is brought about by another. *We have to fight the temptation to privatize our Christian lives. Your faith is personal, yes, but it is definitely not private.* When you are saved you are brought into the family of God and the here and now manifestation of that family of God is through your local church where you are sharpened and by God’s grace where you can sharpen others.

- i. We have to humble ourselves and allow others to speak truth into our lives, to listen with a gentle spirit that is not *first defensive* to what they are saying but first seeks to self-examine and pray that the Holy Spirit would bring about conviction or clarity to the sin issue itself.
- ii. I loved hearing the the testimony of Michael Hickinbotham as we were doing his elder nominee interview this past Tuesday. He talked about how in college a guy randomly asked him if he could meet with him one day. So once they are in his dorm room the friend says, “Are you a Christian, Michael?” To which Michael responds, “well yeah, but why do you ask?” And the friend says, “Because I could tell there was something different about you, but I couldn’t tell you were a Christian from your behavior. If you’d be willing I’d like to invest myself in discipling you.”
 1. That’s a hard thing to hear, but look at what the Lord’s discipline through that brother has brought about in the life of Michael. Faithfulness to God, a loving Christian marriage, children who serve the Lord. God’s discipline can be painful to experience or hear, but it brings about great joy in the end. His discipline in the past has been a blessing to us as a church today because of his service, because of his son Daniel’s service who leads us today. And how many other countless stories are true of us in this room. It serves to grow the church overall.
- iii. And remember, we are all on equal footing here under the cross. The beauty of the local church is that sinners who have rebelled against God, their creator, can now through Jesus Christ come together as the redeemed saints and people of God and experience God’s grace collectively and corporately. So when sin is disciplined in our lives in the midst of the local church, we don’t have to worry that we are now ostracized or estranged from others, we don’t have to worry of being viewed as an inferior Christian, we don’t have to worry that somehow we don’t measure up to others here, because we can rest in the surety that Christ has redeemed us by his blood and that as his chosen elect we (in Christ) **In him we (now) have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding. - Ephesians 1:7-8.** If correction can’t happen here, where else can it?
 1. And let me say a quick word of warning to you who might speak the discipline into another’s life, or might hear the confession from your fellow brother or sister. Guard your heart from pride lest you fall. Remind yourself often of what the Lord delivered you from. Do not be

tempted to look down on them for their specific sin just because you don't struggle with it.

This call to discipline takes a collective maturing of the congregation

- iv. This means that when John lovingly points out an area of arrogance and pride in Bob's life, their friendship and bond is not broken but strengthened. When a faithful older woman provides gentle correction on how a young mom is failing to discipline her children, she listens and then comes back to that lady for further advice. When a husband asks his wife for forgiveness for failing to lead her well, she doesn't view him as less of a man but as even more of one. Within the body of Christ our standing is not based on our failures but on the Savior who redeemed us. So let us be a place that grows in loving the discipline that comes from God and from his people.
 - a. **Illust.** I have shared this story to the men here before, but in my first year of seminary a little over 7 years ago I had the temptation to be one who hates correction. I had known this guy for maybe two months and we had started attending the same church and doing the same internship. Because of that I asked him if he would be willing to meet for some accountability and prayer. At this point we had probably hung out 4 or 5 times with our wives, neither of us had children then. Early one morning he comes over for our first meeting and he takes me to Ephesians 5 where it says that a husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church and to promote her holiness by washing her with the water of the Word. We read the passage and then he looked at me and said, "Ryan, I have hung out with you and your wife now a few times, and I notice that the manner in which you speak about her isn't like this. She's often the target of your jokes and you often belittle her." (Pause)
 - b. Now everything in me wanted to hate what he said, to explain it away, to come to my own defense, to simply tell him he didn't understand. But his gentle and firm rebuke, combined with the conviction of the Holy Spirit wouldn't let me. He was right. And by God's grace I look back on that as a defining moment in my Christian walk and he is to this day one of my closest friends.

F. So a way in which we learn to love discipline is by inviting correction into our lives.

3. Know God deeply (take time here)

- **Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge..”**

A. The byproduct of loving discipline, this Proverb tells us, is that we in turn love knowledge. But knowledge of what is the question? There are many things we can be knowledgeable about, but what kind of knowledge has a lasting effect on our lives? This is in part why I asked Alan to read from the beginning of Proverbs for our Scripture reading as I think it helps to shed light on that answer.

a. **Proverbs 1:7 - The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and discipline.**

B. Fearing God, that is knowing him and loving him and cherishing him above all else, is the beginning of knowledge. You then begin to realize, and understand and to seek out truth because we serve a God who reveals truth. And when you love the discipline that His Word brings in your life, that his people bring in your life, then you *show yourself to love knowledge and in turn prove that you fear him*. This is an all-encompassing truth of treasuring God above all else.

C. We looked at the facet of discipline that involves correction, but part of being disciplined involves instruction, it involves gaining knowledge in how to live a life pleasing unto the Lord. It involves a process of discipleship in which you grow in your walk with God. The saying is true, “if a man loves the end, he will love that which leads to the end.” To love knowing God you must love the instruction about Him and the pursuit of knowing Him. We must long to and work at knowing God deeply.

a. In the preface to his famous book, Knowing God, J. I. Packer writes, **“The conviction behind [this] book is that ignorance of God - ignorance both of his ways and of the practice of communion with him - lies at the root of much of the church’s weakness today.”**

i. In other words, Packer argues, the state of the church is often weak today because we don’t know God deeply. We don’t seek to understand his ways and what it means to have fellowship and friendship with him. In a horrible bifurcation we have somehow divorced the head from the heart instead of understanding that the truths about God should directly affect and inform our affections for God! As A. W. Tozer says in his book of The Knowledge of the Holy, “I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God.” In the same book he says, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

ii. So what does this mean? It means that right thinking leads to right worship, right living, right adoration, and right wholeness to our service to God. When you think small thoughts of God, you then serve a small God and your life will show it. But when I read the Scriptures I am filled with a sense of how big my God is. The God who ordains the beginning from the end, who is working out all things, be it suffering, or heartache, or discipline or instruction for my good, the God who cares for the lilies of the fields and the birds of the sky and calls me not to worry about the future, and knew me before I was formed in the womb, who numbers the hairs on my head (few they may be), and calls me to know him and love him and serve him! I read about this God of the bible and I want to know Him more and more because he is infinitely worthy of knowing! That is the God I love and serve. And THAT is the knowledge that we are to seek as we learn to love discipline. Knowing God deeply.

1. There is a quote from a sermon by a famous preacher in the past that I have hanging on the bulletin board in my office that talks about this very thing. I'd like to read an abbreviated version for you. He began his sermon like this..

"It has been said by someone that 'the proper study of mankind is man.' I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God's elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which we can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father.

There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought, 'Behold I am wise.' But when we come to this master science, finding that our plummet cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass's colt; and with solemn exclamation, 'I am but of yesterday, and know nothing.' No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God. . . .

We can know a lot of things about a lot of very unimportant things that ultimately don't matter in this life. Let's be purposeful about knowing our God deeply. For knowing about God and knowing God personally is the most practical thing that anyone can engage in. It affects every area of your life.

4. Don't be stupid

Allow me to read the verse once more, paying attention to the second clause.

“Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but one who hates correction is stupid.”

An older translation of the word stupid here in our verse would say, “brutish.” This Hebrew word here is closely associated with the word picture of being brutish or dumb like cattle. We say stupid today. The idea is clear, stupidity reveals itself, a brutishness within you reveals itself when you hate correction. When you hate the discipline that the Lord brings about.

- A. In other words, if I can be this direct, a stupid person hates correction; whether it be from God's Word or otherwise, whether it be written or preached or taught. They hate the discipline that close discipleship in a local church can bring, and so they show themselves to be stupid.
 - a. I don't know how else to practically say this, don't be like that. As you learn to love discipline, be one who fights against the sinful nature within you that will hate correction. Listen, as we said, with a humble spirit.
 - b. We don't want to be brutish, to be stupid, because that is contrary to the imago dei, the image of God, that we were created in. The beasts in the field, no animal on this earth is created in the image of God, that is what characterizes us as the crown of creation. We then, in part, throw that away when we act in such a manner. When we act stupid.
- B. And what's even more frightening about this language is what it reveals to be true of us spiritually. We are in danger. Danger of either not knowing God truly or in danger of missing out on the opportunity for growth that discipline and correction can bring about in our lives.
 - a. The Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the OT, translates this word in the same way it uses fool in the NT. Look at some of its uses here:
 - i. **Luke 11:40 - “Fools! Didn't he who made the outside make the inside too?”**
 - ii. **Luke 12:20 (The Parable of the rich fool) - ““But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is demanded of you. And the things you have prepared—whose will they be?’”**
 - iii. **1 Peter 2:15 - “For it is God's will that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good.”**
 - iv. **Ephesians 5:17 - “So don't be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.”**

A fool, a stupid person, is not something I want to be called by God nor be characterized by in my life.

And so, in light of Ephesians 5, what is the Lord's will for your life? Well brothers and sisters, we have been talking about it. Embrace his discipline and correction. Learn to love it and invite it into your life as you see how the grace of God continues to grow you and shape you into the image of His Son. Don't be stupid, don't be a fool. Flee from the sins that seek to ensnare you and run to the cross that frees you.

A few months back Pastor Daniel preached a great sermon on how the imperatives in the Bible, the commands of God, are rooted and grounded in the indicatives. That is, what is true of you in Christ, that your sins are forgiven and that his righteousness is yours then informs you and enables you by His Spirit to live out a Godly life. And this is true when we look at the descriptions of wise living and foolish living in the Proverbs. We need to understand that what enables us to follow God's wisdom is what has already been accomplished for us in Christ. What has been done for us through his death, burial, and resurrection then allows us to act in accordance with his will. When he chose you before the foundation of the world, and redeemed you, and called you his own, then he transferred you from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son. Let us walk worthy of that calling. These indicatives allow you to learn to obey and practice the imperatives. Imperatives that we have seen today to love God's discipline, to invite correction into your life, to know Him deeply, and to resist being a fool.

Let's pray.