

Two Ways to Live

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[0 : 0 0] God's word for guidance on how to live our lives, right? And in many cases, God gives us really clear instructions on what to do in specific situations! Situations like this. Don't steal. Don't covet something that your neighbour has. Don't commit adultery.

Have no other gods before me. Well, the answer to all those questions is really clear in the Bible, but what about specific situations which God's law does not cover?

Like what person should I marry? What should I do with my money or my time? How should I respond to that person? Tim Keller defines wisdom as knowing the right thing to do in the 80% of life situations in which moral rules don't provide clear answers.

Another author says this, wisdom is skill for living life well in God's world. But the book of Proverbs is also clear about something else. Wisdom is not just skill for living well.

Wisdom is ultimately the difference between eternal life and eternal death. Wisdom is not just a helpful add-on, like a software update on your phone or a bunch of kale thrown on top of your smoothie.

[1 : 4 6] No, in today's text, we are presented with two paths which lead to two polar opposite destinations.

The path of wisdom leads to eternal life. The path of folly leads to eternal destruction.

For the next moments, would you put everything else aside and deeply consider with me which one of these paths you are walking on today?

Nothing could be more important. Would you pray with me now? Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.

Let's pray.

[3 : 3 1] Let's pray. a voice. It's like he imagines what wisdom would say to us if she had a voice. And what we're going to find through this speech is that wisdom pursues or runs after fools.

Now, both speeches tell us about two paths. They are not physical paths in the sense that you can physically walk them, but they are spiritual paths which we all journey along in our lives. And just to say from the outset that these two paths remind us of Jesus' words in Matthew 7. You can read along here. Jesus said, Enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. King Solomon in Proverbs, he called him the path of folly. That's the wide path. And many go on it, but it leads to destruction.

And then we have the path of wisdom, which is narrow, and few find it, but it leads to eternal life. So we're going to start with the first speech.

Where a father is instructing his son, and here's the main point of this speech. Warning, avoid the path of folly. Have a look at verse 8 again with me.

Listen, my son, to your father's instruction, and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They are a garland to grace your head, and a chain to adorn your neck. The first thing we learn is this. If you listen to wisdom, it will beautify you. Like a garland or a necklace adorns a bride on her wedding day, wisdom adorns our character with a transcendent beauty that attracts people in. They see the glory of God in us. And so the father pleads with his son. He says, adorn yourself with this wisdom.

[6 : 01] Because if wisdom will beautify you, folly will destroy you. The father warns the son to avoid the path of folly at all costs. We can just see him taking his son aside, setting him down. He said, there's something you need to know.

You need to listen to me. Verse 10. My son, if sinful men entice you, do not give in to them. If they say, come along with us, let's lie and wait for innocent blood. Let's ambush some harmless soul. Verse 13. We will get all sorts of valuable things and fill our houses with plunder. Cast lots with us. We will all share the loot. My son, do not go along with them. Do not set foot on their paths.

Here's the first thing we learn about folly. Folly entices us to reject God's good way and take its path.

Folly lures us in. It seems good. In chapter 5 of Proverbs, it's the folly of easy sex when no one else is watching.

Here in chapter 1, it's the folly of making an easy buck at the expense of others. It could mean not being completely honest on your tax return. Maybe it's getting your pal to check you in when you're running late to work.

[7 : 45] Maybe it's taking credit for an idea that somebody else came up with. Oh, everyone's doing it. But it always comes at the expense of others. Don't go down that path, the father says. Why?

Because fools will destroy themselves in the end. Look at verse 17. How useless to spread a net where every bird can see it. These men lie in wait for their own blood.

They ambush only themselves. Such are the paths of all who go after ill-gotten gain. It takes away the life of those who get it.

Here's the point. If you continue on a foolish path, your sin will catch up with you in the end. Your folly will be exposed, and it'll destroy your life.

Just turn on the news any evening of the week, and you'll see another person whose life has been destroyed by their own folly. That's the first speech.

[8 : 56] Avoid the path of folly at all costs. Now, the second speech is this. We all went and chose the path of folly anyway.

We all chose the way of fools. We have loved our naive, foolish paths more than God's wise paths.

The path of folly leads to destruction, and guess what? We all chose it. That's the bad news. But here's the good news.

In the second speech, wisdom is personified as a person who pursues fools like us.

She cries out, repent! Turn to the path of wisdom. It's not too late for any one of us fools walking the path of folly.

[10 : 03] And as we read this speech, even though it was written a thousand years before Jesus, we cannot help but see reflections of him.

The one in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. This lady wisdom is not everything that Jesus is, but Jesus ultimately embodies wisdom.

Have a look at verse 20. Out in the open, wisdom calls aloud. She raises her voice in the public square. On top of the wall, she cries out.

At the city gate, she makes her speech. Did you notice here? Wisdom doesn't hide herself away. She comes right out to meet us where we are at in our folly.

Wisdom is available to any of us. And likewise, Jesus came right into our world of folly to meet us right where we are at.

[11 : 06] Jesus is available to us. But more than that, wisdom pursues us. Look at verse 22. She cries out, How long will you who are simple love your simple ways?

How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge? How long? We hear echoes of Jesus, the one who cried out in Matthew 23, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and you were not willing.

Christ, our wisdom, who cried out to the crowds at the temple, Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Christ, our wisdom, who moved towards foolish sinners and tax collectors eating with them, choosing to do that, saying, It's not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners. You see, Jesus pursues us. He calls us out of the path of folly and onto his path, the path of wisdom.

So, when we hear wisdom cry aloud in this speech, ultimately, we are hearing Christ calling us. And what is wisdom's call? What do we need to do now that we all realize we're on the path of folly, that we chose that path?

[12 : 52] Well, it's so simple. Verse 23, Repent at my rebuke. It's not too late to turn around and walk on the path of wisdom.

It's not too late to receive Christ. There might be many people in this room who've done that already. Praise God. What does it mean to repent?

Step 1. Acknowledge I am a fool. I have sinned against God. I have made a mess of things in my life.

I'm turning away from my own path of folly. I'm turning to Christ. I am trusting in Him.

I believe that He died on the cross for all of my foolishness. He took the destruction that I deserved and He rose again defeating my death.

[13 : 56] I trust in Him now. I follow Him. That's what it means to repent. Then wisdom tells us why we should repent.

And she does this by presenting the two paths to us. showing what will happen if you follow each one. We're going to start with the path of folly which leads to eternal destruction.

We're going to see four consequences if we continue on this path. It's really important that everyone here understands these four consequences. This is God's word to us today.

This is the first one. Wisdom will laugh at you. Look at verse 24. Since you refuse to listen when I call and no one pays attention when I stretch out my hand, since you disregard all my advice and do not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh when disaster strikes you.

Now how do we understand this? Well, this is not a heartless laugh. This is not God saying, ha ha, like Bart Simpson.

[15 : 11] No, not like that. This is when God rejoices over the defeat of evil. This is when God's goodness and righteousness is vindicated forever.

I think this is also a laugh of amazement at the absurdity of fools. It's like Christ is saying, ha, are you kidding me? I offered you everything you could possibly desire, peace, love, joy, pleasures forevermore, and you still ran after emptiness and folly as if it was better than me.

Really? Do you tremble at the thought of Christ saying that to you one day? Here's a second consequence of rejecting wisdom.

Wisdom will reject you. Look at verse 28. Then they will call to me, but I will not answer. They will look for me, but will not find me, since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the Lord.

Friends, there will come a time when it will be too late for each one of us. We will be so far down the path of folly that we will be beyond the point of return.

[16 : 38] We don't even know if we have tomorrow. Don't mess around with Christ's free invitation to repent. There will come a day when this life is over that he will reject you and the invitation will expire.

here. Here's a third consequence of rejecting wisdom. You will eat the fruit of your ways. Have a look at verse 30.

Since they wouldn't accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes. Basically, whatever you spent your life doing, whatever you most wanted in this life, you're going to get it in the next.

If you loved your own folly more than Christ's wisdom, Christ will give it to you forever. You will be left with nothing but your darkness and emptiness forever.

Don't be left there, wisdom warns us. Here's the last and final consequences in verse 32. For the waywardness of the simple will kill them and the complacency of fools will destroy them.

[18 : 04] Folly is many things. It's making an easy buck at the expense of others. It's rash words. It's quickness to anger. It's a lying tongue. It's being boastful. But ultimately, folly is our rejection of Jesus.

It's our ignoring of his good rule over our lives. Rejecting Christ is rejecting wisdom and we will die separated from him forever.

That's what this says. Note the words in that verse. It says, the complacency of fools will destroy them. What's complacency? It's a fake sense of ease.

You think, oh, everything's okay. I've got this. I'm fine. Whenever it really isn't. This is serious.

We need to examine ourselves here. Do we fit the category of a complacent fool? Genuinely, ask yourself this. Maybe you're telling yourself and everyone else that, yeah, I'm a Christian.

[19 : 15] I follow Jesus. Maybe you've gone to church for a very long time. Maybe you read your Bible. Maybe you pray. I don't know. But in reality, you don't listen to Jesus.

You're king of your own life. You don't really care what he has to say to you. You're doing life your way. Hear Christ's words to you in Matthew 7.

Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? And did your name drive out demons? And in your name perform many miracles? Basically, didn't we do a load of holy religious stuff?

Then Jesus says, then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you. Away from me, you evil doers.

God hear. Those are the most horrific words you are I going to ever hear. Christ says that there will be many complacent fools who presume upon his grace having never actually wanted him or his wisdom.

[20 : 33] Don't walk that path. There's another path. instead we can repent and walk the path of wisdom which leads to eternal safety there is hope there is still time to repent because after showing us all the consequences of walking the path of folly wisdom now shows us all the blessings of turning to its path so let's have a look at these four amazing blessings that you will experience if you have repented and turned to Christ here's the first one it's in verse 23 repent of my rebuke then I will pour out my thoughts to you or the ESV translation says I will pour out my spirit to you now this points us forward to the Holy Spirit who Christ promised to anybody who believes in him that means God living in you reminding you of everything you are in Christ never to be alone again what an incredible blessing to have the Holy Spirit living in you

God himself blessing number one here's blessing number two you will know wisdom more and more as you walk the path of wisdom wisdom promises to make known to you her teaching you will grow wiser and wiser as the Holy Spirit living in you leads you into all truth reminding you of who you are in Christ you will become the kind of person who makes wiser decisions in increasing measure because you will become more like Jesus our example of wisdom that's the second blessing here's the third you will live in eternal safety look at verse 33 but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease without fear of harm now let's just say if you live wisely if you do what God tells you to do in the book of Proverbs you are more likely to stay out of harm's way in this life like nine times out of ten life is going to go better for you if you follow what Proverbs is telling you to do but Jesus actually fulfills this promise eternally he promises eternal safety to all who repent and turn to him and that's because of this those who are in Christ are bound to him where Jesus goes you will go

Christ promises to keep you on that path of wisdom because you are united to him he will finish the work he started in you he will bring you all the way to that new heavens and earth where you will live forever safe and secure with Jesus he died the death you deserved for your folly and he was raised so you could also be raised with him to eternal life what a blessing to enjoy and the last thing it said it in that verse as well you will have no fear of harm you will be at ease until that final day you don't have to fear the eternal destruction that your choices deserve and even though you still make foolish choices we all do

Christ will keep you because you belong to him and because he has paid for all your foolish choices that is the incredible news of the gospel while we walk the path of wisdom we are not yet made perfect no but we are going in the right direction towards the new heaven and earth where folly will be removed forever until that day you don't have to fear what might happen to you you will be at ease people may hurt you you may lose those you love or things you hold dear but what could separate you from the love of Christ nothing you are safe with him so if you are following Christ today on that narrow winding path and when it gets hard remember who keeps you on that path remember who goes with you remember you belong to him and everything he earned is promised to you he will be faithful even when you are not so as we finish

I want you to look at those four blessings of walking the path of wisdom can you honestly say they are yours are you trusting in Christ and walking his path today if not after everything we have heard how could you reject wisdom now how could you say oh I know something better for me I'm choosing my own path if you realize that you are walking the path of folly that Jesus isn't really your king even though you might say he is you don't really want to hear his word well here wisdom's called to repent today because the path you're on leads to eternal destruction repent and turn away from it run to Christ he will forgive you for your folly he will pour out his spirit upon you he will keep you with him on the path of wisdom all the way to that new heavens and earth and until that day you will have no need to fear ever losing him for those of you who look at those four blessings and like you're saying thank the

[27 : 30] Lord I do know those for me may I encourage you today may your heart overflow with thankfulness and praise to Christ your wisdom your savior who has achieved all of this for you you've achieved none of it may your heart overflow with praise to him may you also long to grow in wisdom more and more each day as you walk with Jesus who has become your wisdom you can never lose him not even your foolish choices can separate you from him now he meets you with new mercies every single day he's guiding you along the path to eternal life let's pray as we pray

I encourage you to speak to Christ from your own heart now examine your heart are you rejecting Christ walking the path of folly how will you respond to his warning and his invitation to repent and if you have received Jesus what's your response to his grace and mercy today how do you long to grow in wisdom our Lord

Jesus Christ we confess our folly we ask you to help us to see our need of Jesus thank you for what he did going to the cross to take the penalty for all our foolishness oh I pray that not one person in this room would walk out this door today still on the path of folly let us all be safe with Christ forever on the path of wisdom we pray this in Jesus name amen amen Thank you.