

Ecclesiastes 10:1–20

Walk and Talk — Wise or Foolish?

Small Group Handout (Full Notes)

Introduction

The book of Ecclesiastes confronts us with the tension between wisdom and foolishness as they are lived out under the sun. In chapter 10, Solomon shows how wisdom and folly reveal themselves not merely in what we know, but in how we walk and how we talk. This passage presses us to examine our hearts, our words, our work, and our responses to authority.

Folly Defined

Folly has nothing to do with intelligence. Biblically, a fool is someone who lacks a proper fear of God. Folly is marked by impulsive disobedience, self-centered arrogance, and a rash disregard for the holiness of God.

Throughout Ecclesiastes, the fool is described as lazy (4:5), ill-tempered (7:9), morally blind (2:14), one who refuses advice (9:17), and someone whose life is not pleasing to God (5:4).

By the Way I Walk (Ecclesiastes 10:1–11)

Wisdom and Everyday Life (1–3)

Wisdom is valuable, but it is also vulnerable. A lifetime of faithful wisdom can be undone by a moment of folly. Two things we can never get back are our words and our time. Both wisdom and foolishness begin in the heart and eventually reveal themselves in everyday life.

The text contrasts the direction of the heart: the wise heart moves toward strength, provision, and deliverance, while the foolish heart moves toward weakness, judgment, and being cast aside. The implication is clear—we must guard our hearts.

“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.” (Proverbs 4:23)

Jesus reinforces this truth by teaching that what fills the heart inevitably overflows through our words and actions (Luke 6:43–45).

The people we surround ourselves with matter. Wisdom and foolishness both rub off. Walking with the wise shapes us toward wisdom, while keeping company with fools leads to harm (Proverbs 13:20).

Wisdom Under Authority (4–7)

Ecclesiastes reminds us that wisdom remains rooted even when power becomes unstable. A calm, measured response is better than multiple heated reactions. Wisdom recognizes the broken realities of life under the sun and responds with patience and discernment rather than impulse.

Careful Speech and Outrage (Verse 20)

We live in a culture of outrage where careless words are easily spoken, especially toward those in authority. While there is a place for Spirit-led prophetic speech, Scripture warns against venomous and reckless talk. Believers are called to speak from a calm place of wisdom, guided by the Spirit, rather than simply airing opinions.

Verse 20 reminds us that what simmers in our hearts eventually comes out in our speech. If wisdom fills the heart, wise words will follow.

Wisdom at Work (8–11)

Wisdom is revealed in how we work. Foolishness shows up in rushing, cutting corners, and avoiding necessary tasks. Ecclesiastes calls us to patient diligence—doing the work carefully, faithfully, and at the right time.

By the Way I Talk (12–15)

Wisdom is not measured by the quantity of our words but by their quality. The fool often speaks excessively, yet says nothing of value. Foolishness is exposed both by the content of words and by their careless abundance.

Prophetic Woe and Blessing (16–17)

Scripture pronounces woe upon nations led by foolish rulers and blessing upon those guided by wisdom. History shows that most great powers collapse from internal corruption rather than external pressure. Foolish leadership eventually leads to decay and downfall.

Small Group Discussion

How did the Holy Spirit speak to you through the sermon and Scripture on Sunday? What stood out to you, and what questions do you have?

The sermon teaches that wisdom and foolishness both begin in the heart. What are some subtle ways foolishness can leak into our daily walk before we notice it? What helps you guard your heart?

Proverbs 13:20 reminds us that the people we walk with influence us. Who or what most shapes your thinking right now, and how can you intentionally walk with the wise?

Ecclesiastes 10 warns about careless speech, especially in moments of outrage. How can we discern when to speak and when to remain silent under the Spirit's guidance?

Where are you most tempted to rush, cut corners, or avoid necessary work? How might wisdom reshape your approach this week?