

Wise Up

Ecclesiastes Part 13

Ecclesiastes 10:1-11 3-9-2014

Summary: To live a wise life, stay calm when people are mad at you, expect trouble in life, sharpen your ax, use your ax, and watch your mouth.

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10:1 Dead flies make a perfumer's oil ferment and stink; so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor. **2** A wise man's heart goes to the right, but a fool's heart to the left. **3** Even when the fool walks along the road, his heart lacks sense, and he shows everyone he is a fool. **4** If the ruler's anger rises against you, don't leave your place, for calmness puts great offenses to rest. **5** There is an evil I have seen under the sun, an error proceeding from the presence of the ruler: **6** The fool is appointed to great heights, but the rich remain in lowly positions. **7** I have seen slaves on horses, but princes walking on the ground like slaves. **8** The one who digs a pit may fall into it, and the one who breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake. **9** The one who quarries stones may be hurt by them; the one who splits trees may be endangered by them. **10** If the ax is dull, and one does not sharpen its edge, then one must exert more strength; however, the advantage of wisdom is that it brings success. **11** If the snake bites before it is charmed, then there is no advantage for the charmer.

Introduction

We have been studying through the book of Ecclesiastes, and we come today to chapter 10. But to introduce this particular study I would like to give you a little context about the role of wisdom in the Christian life. We have spent all these weeks learning these wisdom principles from Ecclesiastes, but I don't want us to lose sight of the bigger picture of why wisdom is so important.

Ephesians 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.

If you have placed your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you trust Him more than you trust yourself – enough to follow Him as a disciple, then you have gone from darkness into light. And now you are called to live accordingly. How do you do that?

10 find out what pleases the Lord.

Exactly what we saw at the beginning of Ecclesiastes – we need to live for God’s pleasure. Find out what pleases Him, and make that the goal of your whole existence. That is always the path to the greatest joy in life. Jesus died on the cross not only to pay the penalty for your sin in your place, but also to purchase your life, so that you would live a life pleasing to Him. And one of the things that really pleases Him is wisdom. Wisdom is pleasing to Him; folly is ugly to Him, so we strive for wisdom.

15 Be very careful, therefore, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity

So we pursue wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to make good decisions in life. We make hundreds of decisions every day, and when the decisions you make are good and beautiful and profitable and right – that is wisdom. Folly (foolishness) is the opposite. That is when you are not very good at making the best choices. God loves it when we live wisely. And the main way to gain wisdom is through the books of the Bible known as the wisdom books – Job through Song of Songs. Ecclesiastes is one of those books.

The message of Ecclesiastes has been basically this. You will make the best choices in life when...

- 1) You realize that we live in a fallen, cursed, futile world. We cannot gain control of it, we cannot understand why all the crazy things that happen happen, and it is futile to try. So...
- 2) Instead of trying to gain control of life, trust God with all that and just enjoy the things in life God has given you to enjoy.
- 3) The way to do that is to fear God, live for His pleasure, and be alert to every time God makes enjoyment of one of His gifts possible.
- 4) But when you do that, keep Judgment Day in mind. Never enjoy one of God’s gifts in a way that would violate some biblical principle and displease God.

Those four points are the basic message of Ecclesiastes. But sprinkled all throughout that message we have run into various different proverbs that the writer drops in. A proverb is a concentrated little statement of wisdom. It is an observation about the way things tend to go in life that will come in handy in making good decisions.

So interspersed throughout his main points in this book, the writer of Ecclesiastes has been dropping a proverb here and a proverb there. But now in chapter 10 it is like he saw that the end of the book is coming and said, “Wow, I have most of my proverbs still left in my wheelbarrow; I’d better just dump them all.” So chapter 10 is just one gem of proverbial wisdom after another.

Wisdom

It Won’t Give You Control

The first one of these proverbs is in verse 4, but before jumping into that he wants to tell us a few things about wisdom itself. At the end of the last chapter he reminded us that wisdom is useful in life, but it will not give you control. Don’t think you can gain control of the uncertainties of life even through wisdom. Time and chance happen to everyone. And even wisdom can be fouled up by someone else’s folly.

1 a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

It takes much less to ruin something than to create it. One fool can ruin something that took 100 wise men 100 years to build. That is one reason why evil so often has the upper hand. Evil is 100 times easier

to generate than good. In fact, if God does not step in and keep injecting good and preserving it, then the entire human race would very quickly drop down to a point of only evil. God showed us that in the time leading up to the flood in Genesis 6. Folly can have a devastating effect. That is why it is so critically important that we strive to eliminate as much folly and foolishness from our lives as we possibly can.

You Can't Hide Folly

2 A wise man's heart goes to the right, but a fool's heart to the left. 3 Even when the fool walks along the road, his heart lacks sense, and he shows everyone he is a fool.

Some of you read verse 2 and think, “Ah, a Republican!” But the association of conservatism with the right and liberalism with the left is a modern thing. That is not what the Bible writers meant by right and left. I think the point here is simply that wise and foolish people go in opposite directions. It is very obvious when someone is a fool by the way he lives. The end of verse 3 is literally, **He says to everyone he is a fool.** That could mean he says to everyone he sees that that person is a fool, or it could mean that he announces his own folly to everyone. Scholars are divided on which it means. And it is hard to choose because fools do both. Fools are always calling other people fools.

“Look at him.”

“What an idiot.”

“Who taught that blockhead how to drive?”

“Whoever made that law is so stupid,” and on it goes.

They think they are smarter than everyone, and that makes it obvious to everyone how foolish they really are.

Fools cannot remain hidden. We see in Proverbs that the only way for a fool to disguise himself is by total silence. The second he opens his mouth, everybody knows. And that inevitably happens, because fools cannot resist airing all their opinions. They don't know how to keep anything to themselves, or how to judge which things are profitable to say and which things are not. When they speak, there is no tact. They say the wrong things to the wrong people at the wrong time. And when you respond, he might look at you but he is not really listening because he is working on formulating his next dumb statement. Even if he quotes the Bible, he will usually misuse it. And if he has a message for you, he will get it wrong. You can't rely on what he says. When he is done speaking the situation is never improved – it is always worse. People's reputations are damaged, the situation is more confused, and God is dishonored. Every time he talks, things get worse, but that does not keep him from continuing to insist on speaking.

Anybody here want to be that guy? There is one way to prevent it, and that is to gain wisdom. So let's dig in to these principles.

1) Stay Calm

4 If the ruler's anger rises against you, don't leave your place, for calmness puts great offenses to rest.

So wisdom principle #1 is to remain calm. Nothing is harder than staying calm when someone's anger is rising against you. I got a kick out of Derek Kidner's commentary on this verse. He said, “What we are invited to notice is that rather absurd human phenomenon, the huff.” When we talk about someone who just got mad and went off in a huff – that is not a very complementary description, right? If someone said that about you, you would probably say, “What? I didn't go off in a huff! I simply exited the room in a dignified way with a certain degree of angst and concern in my heart.” Uh – yeah – you went off in a huff. None of us like our response to be described that way because the word “huff” highlights the pettiness of it. That really struck me, because I was actually in a huff when I read that statement. Something had just happened that had gotten me upset, and I was tempted to respond in a huff-like way. But the Lord made sure that it happened right at the moment when I happened to be studying this verse - about how remaining calm can lay great offenses to rest. If I had studied this verse any other time, I

would have thought about going off in a huff as something that immature, petty people do. But at that moment I realized, it was exactly what I was being tempted to do.

We are all tempted to respond that way when someone hurts us – especially when it is someone we are working for. You are working hard, faithfully serving, doing your best, and then the one in charge says something that demeans you or humiliates you, and what is our first impulse? “I quit! You think you can run this place without me? Fine!” and we go off in a huff. And as we walk away we tell ourselves, “I’m not being petty. It’s the *principle* of the thing.” But if we are honest we have to admit – there is no biblical principle requiring us to quit just because the one in charge did something we didn’t like. Quitting at that point is not a matter of principle; it is a matter of impulse. We are in a huff.

When your boss is in a huff, that is the worst time for you to get in a huff, because two huffs together create ten times the damage of just one huff and one calm person. The worst time to get mad is when the other person is mad, because multiplied madness makes a mess. Everyone is always glad when cooler heads prevail. You never hear anyone say, “Oh, thankfully the hotter heads prevailed.”

And I know this is difficult. I don’t know about you, but for me, nothing tempts me toward anger more than when someone is angry with me. When people do things to hurt me, I can overlook that. When people ignore me or neglect me, that’s not a problem. Even when people lie to me, that usually does not tempt me toward anger. But when people are mad at me, it is everything I can do to restrain my flesh from getting mad back. But if I do that – if I let go and get angry, I always regret it – always. There is never a time in my life when I said, “Boy, I sure am glad I returned anger for anger.” If my wife is a little bit short with me, or says something that tempts me to be sharp back to her, or cool, or whatever – I have a choice. If I take her in my arms and say, “Someone as beautiful as you couldn’t have meant that as sharply as it sounded,” 99% of the time the sharpness is replaced with warmth, and if there is a problem we can talk it through as partners without any hostility at all, and the rest of our day is happy. A soft answer really does turn away wrath (Pr.15:1). But if I give in to the impulses of my flesh and return a cold attitude for what I perceived to be a cold attitude from her, all it will do is build all day, and I get to the end of the day and look back and it was a miserable day. Nothing good came of it, and now we are ten times farther apart than we were to begin with. And it might take days to recover. Why do that? Why sentence myself to a miserable day just so I can follow an impulse of anger? Why pour gasoline on a fire? Why does it feel like such a huge loss or such a huge sacrifice to repay a harsh word with a soft, kind word? For that to feel like a loss to us is insanity. Nothing is gained from retaliation.

“But something has to be done! This person is in sin. It would be unloving for me not to correct him – for his own sake.”

Ok, if that is the case – if your concern is not for yourself but for the other person, that’s good. That is the right reason to confront someone. But when you do, let me suggest a few principles that will help make your confrontation most effective – because if your concern is for their spiritual wellbeing, then you certainly don’t want to confront them in a way that they are going to be unlikely to receive, right? And don’t we all have to admit that even when our concern is for the other person’s wellbeing – still, it is entirely possible that our motive is just a little bit mixed? There might be just a little bit of vengefulness or retaliation in our hearts that is mixed in with our good motive? So how do you guard against that, and still confront the person in a way that will make them most likely to be receptive to what you are saying?

Six Questions for Confrontation

Let me suggest 6 basic questions to ask yourself before you confront:

1) Have I really listened?

Proverbs 18:13 He who answers before listening-- that is his folly and his shame.

Do I know that person’s point of view well enough to describe it in a way he/she would agree with? Have I really truly listened to their heart on the matter, so that if I explained to a third party how they feel, that person would say, “Yes, you hit the nail right on the head. That is exactly my point of view”?

2) Does love require that I bring it up? Or can I overlook it?

Proverbs 10:12 Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs.

Most offences can be overlooked. We are all sinful, we all say and do dumb things, we all hurt one another with our carelessness at one point or another. We don't have to point it out every time. If you suspect there is an area of unrepentant sin, then you need to confront. But if it is just a stumble – let it just slide off your back and don't let your mind dwell on it.

3) Is my timing right?

Proverbs 15:23 A man finds joy in giving an apt reply-- and how good is a timely word!

It is insanity to confront them while they are still in a huff. If some later time or different context would make the correction easier to receive, wait until that time. If you truly care about fixing this bad behavior, then why confront them in a way that will make them less likely to repent?

Proverbs 25:11 A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.

Wise people do not just speak wise words – they speak them at the right time. Fools will take words that would have been wise and say them at the wrong time and rip all the power right out of them.

4) Have I thought through how to bring it up in a way the person is most likely going to be able to receive it?

Hebrews 10:24 let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Give it some careful thought and consideration. The issue here is not just timing, but wording and context. If you start by affirming the valid aspects of their point of view in a way they would agree with, that will make them much more likely to listen. If you start right out with your complaint, that will be more likely to put them into a defensive, non-receptive posture. If you were in their shoes, what would make you more likely to be able to receive this correction?

5) Have I prayed for God's help?

2 Timothy 2:25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

Repentance can only come by an act of God on the heart. You can think all these other things through until you are blue in the face, but it is not going to do any good if God doesn't act. You can do your best to try to figure out what approach would be best, but you have no way of knowing for sure. Only God knows. And only God can prepare the person's heart to be receptive. And only God can deal with wrong attitudes and perceptions you might have in your heart that need to be corrected.

6) Do I need to seek counsel from someone else before I try to resolve this problem?

Proverbs 15:22 Plans fail for lack of counsel

Be very careful with this one, because this is the most common excuse for gossip that there is.

"I need your advice on how to deal with this problem..." and what that really means is, "I want to vomit all my angry thoughts about this person all over you."

Do not say anything to anyone that will hurt that person's reputation unless it is absolutely necessary for that person's good. But if it is necessary, seek help. Many times you can get help by describing hypothetical situations. You do not always have to reveal who the person is, although sometimes it can't be avoided. But if you really believe that another person will be able to guide you to a more godly approach that will benefit this person you are correcting, then ask. We won't have success unless we

follow biblical principles. And if there is someone who can help you understand the biblical principles that are needed, get their advice.

2) Expect Trouble

Ok, so the first wisdom principle he gives us is to remain calm when someone is hostile or angry toward you. Don't go off in a huff. Very often you can defuse the whole situation just by remaining calm. The second wisdom principle starts in verse 5. This one is to remind us, once again, about the reality of the curse. From verse 5 all the way through verse 9, he does not really tell us to do anything – he just warns us about the troubles of life in a fallen, futile world. So the message seems to be this: expect trouble. If you are going to make wise decisions in life, one key is to not be thrown off when messed up, wacked out things happen. Fools are blown away when things don't go the way they should. Wise people realize that is part of the game, so they can roll with it.

Wisdom Matters more than Position

One thing that is really messed up in this world is the fact that many times the wrong people end up in charge.

5 There is an evil I have seen under the sun, an error proceeding from the presence of the ruler: 6 The fool is appointed to great heights, but the rich remain in lowly positions. 7 I have seen slaves on horses, but princes walking on the ground like slaves.

He calls that **an evil**. There are some who would say this isn't an evil at all. They would say, "Man, any time you get a poor, lowly peasant from the slum, and he works his way all the way up to some great height of leadership; and the rich fat cat is out on the street – that's victory for social justice!" It might be, but not always. If the rich fat cat happens to be wise, and the poor guy from the slums happens to be a fool, then it is not a good thing that he rose to power. It is an evil. And the ones responsible for that evil are the ones who put those fools in power. Whoever appointed them, or voted for them – those people will have to answer to God for this great evil, and for all the damage that those fools cause in their office.

So that is one thing to be ready for in this life – the reality that very often fools end up in charge. Don't freak out when that happens. Don't complain and grumble. Don't give up hope. Just realize that happens sometimes, and work around it. That is what wise people do. They are not thrown off by the craziness that happens in life. They always seem to be able to just roll with it, because they expect a certain amount of craziness. They understand that no matter what you are doing, sooner or later something is going to go wrong.

Be Careful Out There

8 The one who digs a pit may fall into it, and the one who breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake. 9 The one who quarries stones may be hurt by them; the one who splits trees may be endangered by them.

Every occupation has occupational hazards. There is an element of danger in every chore. If your job involves heights, you might fall. If your job involves moving some stones that have been stacked there a long time, you might get bitten by a snake. You deal with rocks, sooner or later one's going to fall down on your foot. You chop trees down, there are dangers connected with that. A wise person is aware that we are living in a fallen world and you cannot always predict what will happen. But you can be aware of what could happen. The guy who installed the sprinkler system at our house showed me how to drain that system to prepare for winter each year. I have to go outside and lift up a cover and unscrew a cap. And he told me, "Be careful when you take this cover off, because this is the perfect habitat for black widows." Good to know. A black widow bite can be fatal. If he hadn't told me about that, it never would have

crossed my mind to concern myself with that. But that is his job, and he has learned a little bit of wisdom over the years. Is it guaranteed that there will be a black widow in there? No. But the probabilities are higher, and so it is something to be alert to.

Part of wisdom is learning about the dangers of life. Why? First, so you can be alert to them and be careful. Should we become paralyzed with fear so we don't do anything? No. He'll show us down in verse 11 that inaction is not the solution. The solution is not to say, "I'll just let the pipes freeze this winter – it's not worth risking my life to lift that cover!" Do I put on huge, long gloves and put 911 on speed dial? No. It's not that much of a danger. But I do look around in there a little bit before I stick my hand in there. Knowledge of risk enables us to exercise appropriate caution.

Secondly, understanding that this is the way life is will enable us to roll with those times when something does happen. I am working on moving a rock pile, a big rock rolls down and crushes my foot, now I have some hospital bills – that happens. For fools, that kind of thing is intolerable. Something like that happens to a fool and the world needs to stop turning, and someone has to pay. Blame needs to be assigned, and someone has to compensate me for my pain and suffering. So I sue my employer, because they never should have had me working around those rocks (even though that is the job I applied for). And I need to sue the company that made these boots I was wearing, because they should have protected me. And I deserve workman's comp, and I should get some kind of settlement from the government, and I am thinking of bringing a civil suit against the descendants of Isaac Newton because there is just way too much gravity in this place! Rocks just should not be allowed to be that heavy – it is ridiculous and outrageous and so someone should give me money to make up for what I have suffered.

Fools do not realize that sometimes hard things just happen. Sometimes you buy hot coffee and spill it on yourself and get burned. That is one of the hazards connected with drinking coffee. You don't need to assign any blame, nobody owes you money because of it – it is just one of those things that sometimes happen – even when you are careful. Sometimes you check for a black widow, but you don't see it, and you get bit anyway. It happens. That's life. Wise people understand that, and they can roll with those punches. It does not stop them in their tracks, it does not make them give up, it does not send them into a fit of grumbling, they don't sue anybody. They just recover the best they can and move on. I go out every day of my life and get in a car and drive around with millions of other people who are in vehicles weighing tons and traveling at high speeds. I put myself in that environment every day for years and years and one day someone runs into me and I get an injury – what a shock! Welcome to the fall of mankind. It happened back in Genesis 3, but some fools are just now waking up to it. Fools have lived in this fallen world all their life and yet they still expect it not to be fallen. You work on a construction site and get smacked in the head with a board, and you act like this is the first awareness you have that we are not in the Garden of Eden anymore. News flash – life is hard.

So, wisdom principle #1, remain calm when people get mad. Principle #2, expect trouble. Principle #3 comes in verse 10.

3) Sharpen Your Ax

10 If the ax is dull, and one does not sharpen its edge, then one must exert more strength; however, the advantage of wisdom is that it brings success.

Picture two guys who each need to cut down a tree. The first guy goes out and starts chopping like crazy. The second guy sits down and takes 20 minutes getting his ax razor sharp. The first guy thinks, "Ha, I've got a 20 minute head start!" He has made all this progress and the other guy hasn't even started. But ten minutes later the guy with the sharp ax already has the tree down, and the first guy isn't even half-way through. What is the principle behind that proverb? It is worth taking some time to sharpen your skills so that your work is more effective. It is good to work hard, but we also need to work smart.

About ten years ago I looked into getting the ACBC counseling certification. I decided I didn't have time – too busy to go through the training. Last fall I finally decided I needed to do it, and now – even though I am only part way through the process, I can see that I have been hacking away with a dull ax for

ten years. A lot of people would have been a lot better off if I had just taken the time to sharpen my ax back then.

How sharp is your ax? In the things God has called you to, are you effective and efficient? Or do you need to take a step back from working and get a little training? Or do some reading? Or take a course? With pastors and Bible teachers I always think about Greek. Learning Greek is so hard. It will take a couple years right out of your life. But it can make your ax so much sharper. Is it possible to figure out what the Bible means without knowing Greek? Yes. But it takes a whole lot more chopping. With a little knowledge of the original languages you can very often do in one swing what used to take a whole day of study. A lot of us learned this about parenting. We hacked away for years, and then finally after the kids were almost grown we got the bright idea to read some books on the subject. Sharpen your ax. And once it's sharpened, don't forget to use it.

4) Use Your Ax

11 If the snake bites before it is charmed, then there is no advantage for the charmer.

It is good to improve your skills, but keep in mind the whole point of honing those skills is so you can use them. Don't get so carried away with sharpening your ax that you never get around to actually cutting down the tree.

"I went to snake charming school, got a PhD in charming, wrote two books on the subject, I'm one of the top experts. This snake right here is one of the deadliest snakes alive, and I want you to know that I have developed a technique that will give me full control over this thing so it's not any threat at all..."

CHOMP!

"Oh, I never got around to charming the snake, and now it bit me. My ax is razor sharp, but I never got around to actually swinging it, and so now I got bit and I'm going to die."

There is a time for training and there is a time to act. We live in a culture that worships education, and so everyone feels like they have to spend years in college, which is sad, because the majority of college degrees never pay for themselves your whole life. You would have earned just as much money without that degree, and you could have saved yourself four years and \$100,000. And in many cases it is more like ten years. You get these professional students, "Yeah, I've been a student here for seven years and I'm already getting an idea of what major I want to pursue." Training is great if it is needed for your task, but don't lose sight of the fact that the purpose of training is working. And we need to always be ready to act when wisdom calls for action.

One of the things a wise person knows is that what you know is worthless unless you actually put it into action. It is great to sharpen your ax, but at some point you need to say, "Ok, now it's sharp enough. Time to start chopping wood." So verse 11 balances verse 10. It is wise to sharpen your ax, but it is foolish to take too long to act. Sometimes it is best to back off from acting, and spend some time planning and preparing and getting ready – sharpening your ax. Other times it is best to step up and act before it's too late and the snake bites someone. Being too slow to act can come back and bite you (literally, if you happen to work with snakes).

"How do you know the difference? How do I know when I should hold off from acting and do some more preparation, and when I should stop preparing and take some action?"

If you are wise enough to understand the value of a sharp ax, and wise enough to understand the urgency of acting before it's too late – then in most cases you will tend to make the right call on when to act and when to wait. And so the preacher reminds us of both principles.

Conclusion

Getting to the point where we actually take action – isn't that our greatest obstacle most of the time? Most of us already know the solution to our biggest problems. Some of you have problems that have you perplexed, and you are not sure what the solution is. But more often we know exactly what the solution is;

we just can't seem to get ourselves to do it. If I am out of shape, it is not one of the great mysteries of the universe why I'm out of shape. I don't need to read any books or enroll in any classes to discover why I'm out of shape. If I crawled up to the top of some mountain and found the smartest guru in the world and asked him, "What is the solution to this problem?" I already know what he's going to say. "Try a few pushups." It is not rocket science. I know exactly what the solution is – I just won't do it. Wisdom is not just knowing the solution. Wisdom is knowing it and doing what you know. Jesus ended the Sermon on the Mount by making that connection between wisdom and putting knowledge into action.

Matthew 7:24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

People say, "Why can't I seem to handle the storms and problems of life? Trouble comes, and my life crumbles like a house of cards. I don't get it. I read my Bible, I study, I come to church, I take notes on the sermons – I'm learning all the same things this other guy is learning, but he seems to be so steadfast in trials. They don't faze him."

Why is that? Jesus says both of these guys hear the word. The wise man hears in verse 24 and the fool hears in verse 26. The only difference is the wise man puts those words into practice.

The starting point of all wisdom is hearing the words of the Lord Jesus Christ and putting them into practice. And if you want the summary of Jesus' words, it was this: "Follow Me." He called everyone to repent, turn from sin, and live a life of trusting Him more than you trust yourself – trusting Him enough to follow Him. That is crucial to understand because not only is that the starting point of wisdom, but it is the power that enables us to live wisely. Most people understand that the biggest difficulty is in putting what we know into action. Most people understand that even if you learn every wisdom principle there is, just deciding to live that way will not be enough. Where does the power come from to be able to put wisdom principles into practice? The answer to that is this: The power source is the Holy Spirit, and the way to access that power is through faith.

1 Corinthians 2:12 We have received ... the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. ...14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God

When you read something in the Bible, you might understand what it means, you might be able to memorize it and teach it, but your heart is not naturally capable of actually accepting it. When you know something is true, but you can't seem to live accordingly – that is because your heart has not fully accepted that truth. And only the Holy Spirit can make your heart able to accept truth from God. And the only way to have the Holy Spirit in you is by trusting the Lord Jesus Christ more than you trust yourself – trusting Him enough to follow Him.

Galatians 3:14 by faith we receive the promise of the Spirit.

When you give up the life of living for yourself, and turn to Christ in faith, at that moment you receive the Holy Spirit – as well as a new nature that is capable of responding to the Spirit. And from that point on, the more you trust Him, the greater the power of the Spirit in your life. So put your faith in Him. Trust His Word. And that will enable you to live wisely by:

- 1) Staying Calm
- 2) Expecting Trouble
- 3) Sharpening Your Ax
- 4) Using Your Ax

That is four of them. We will try to get through another six or so next time.

Benediction: Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. 17And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him

Application Questions (James 1:25)

- 1) Of the four wisdom principles (stay calm when people are mad at you, expect trouble, sharpen your ax, use your ax), which two come hardest for you?
- 2) Which two come easiest to you? Do you have any advice for the group on how to improve in those areas?