

The Paths of Wisdom & Folly

Proverbs 1:8-19

Synopsis

As we continue our sermon series through Revelation, we enter into Solomon's first major section on wisdom, which comes in the form of a poetic letter. We recall that chapters 1-9 largely are a series of poems functioning like a setup for the proverbs which appear in chapters 10-31. Here, Solomon lays out two paths for life, folly and wisdom. Folly, in this passage, is shown in the image of a violent gang who tempts a young man to follow them in their abominable deeds. While the instruction to avoid joining violent gangs might feel overly simplistic in terms of wisdom literature, in the counsel we learn something about the temptation to follow the crowd into folly. This proves particularly important when we think about various social movements over the last decade that have led many well-meaning Christians into folly.

Sermon Outline

Main Idea: The invitation of the crowd may sound compelling but often leads to death.

1. Exposition
 - a. Marks of the Way of Wisdom (8-9)
 - b. Marks of the Way of Folly (10-16)
 - i. Often uses a group mentality (10)
 - ii. Against God's justice (10)
 - iii. Offer shortcuts to otherwise good things (13)
 - iv. Appealing because of their own sense of justice (14)
 - v. Represent a path, not just a single deed (15)
 - vi. Motivated ultimately by greed (19)
 - c. The Trap the Fool Falls Into (17-18)
2. Application
 - a. Modern Calls for Social Justice
 - b. How Christ's Wisdom is Set Apart

Reflection & Discussion Questions

1. **Observing the Text:** First, make sure to have your group spend time looking at the text, and observing the text without reflecting on the sermon. You want the group to get familiar with the text, and the words, and the flow of thought. Keep making observations until you feel the group has a solid grasp of the entire text.

2. Consider the ideas the violent gang speaks in verses 11-14. These words, when read in this format, almost seem ridiculous. But they're not. Foolish groups have been using this same logic since the days of Solomon. What are some ways you have seen this logic spoken by fools either in your own personal life or in the world around you?
3. Have you ever made a foolish decision because of the crowd's persuasion (peer pressure). If we're honest, we all have at some point. This is a chance to be both vulnerable and reflective. What were the consequences of your folly? And what did you learn about Christ and your Christian faith upon reflection?
4. The path of folly offers shortcuts to life. It wants to get rich without the work (v. 13). What foolish shortcuts have you come across in your life? Have you witnessed fools fall into these traps before?
5. Verses 17-18 essentially say that fools lay the very trap that they will eventually be caught in. Are there any areas in your life that you are wrestling with discernment over? Use your Small Group, with Bibles open, to seek wisdom on those issues.

For Family Discipleship

Talk to your children about peer pressure. After reading the passage to them, ask them if they have ever experienced a situation where someone else invited them to do something that they knew was wrong and they got in trouble for it. Explain how this passage teaches us not to follow the voice of people who invite us to do things that we know are wrong in God's Word.

For Men and Women

Same question, yet men and women will have unique answers to this that can be discussed in separate groups.

For Men: What spaces and voices seem to have the most powerful influence over men today (how they think, what they desire, what their expectations are for family and life)? How can Christian men particularly guard themselves against the potential folly of these influences?

For Women: What spaces and voices seem to have the most powerful influence over women today (how they think, what they desire, what their expectations are for family and life)? How can Christian women particularly guard themselves against the potential folly of these influences?