

The Way of the Wise

Wisdom and Foolishness

Introduction

[Teacher, call a child who you know loves basketball to the front of the room and show him the basketball.] Do you love to play basketball? Why? (It's really fun!) If I gave this ball to you to play with, what are some of the things you can do with it? (Dribble, shoot baskets.) Well, I know that if I give you this ball, you would not be content to just stand here and hold it. You love playing basketball so much you probably would want to shoot baskets and pass the ball to some other kids. Show us how to dribble. [Let the child dribble for a while.] Pass the ball back to me, now.

We like to do the things that we love, don't we? We would not want to play basketball if we don't like the game, would we?

- If we love a certain kind of candy bar, we will eat it when someone gives us one.
- If we love to sing, we will sing.
- If we love to play the piano, we won't complain about having to practice it.
- If we love a pet, we will care for it and protect it.

We do what we love and our actions show others what is in our hearts.

The Bible talks about two paths in life, the *Way of the Wise* and the *Way of the Foolish*. Today we're going to talk about the fact that what we love puts us on one path or the other.

Opening Prayer

Father, today we are going to learn that we show others what we believe is true not by what we say we believe, but by what we *do*. The way we act shows other people what is in our hearts. We want our

lives to be pleasing to You, so give us pure hearts and clean hands before You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Doing wrong is fun for a fool, but living wisely brings pleasure to the sensible. (Proverbs 10:23).

Lesson

Loving wisdom makes us do wise things; loving foolishness makes us do foolish things.

What does the word "*wisdom*" mean? [Hold up the word WISDOM then a sign with the following definition:]

Wisdom is loving what is right and good, and doing it.

Being wise is not just *knowing* what is right, but it is also *loving* what is right and *wanting* to do the right thing.

For example, being *kind* and *generous* is good and right, isn't it?

- How would you act if you loved being kind and generous?

If you love *kindness*, would you act *mean*? If you love *generosity* would you act *selfishly*? You may act mean or selfish *sometimes*, but if you truly love what is right and good, you will not usually act *mean* or *selfish*.

[Teacher, draw a large heart on the board.] The love of what is good and right comes first. Then the action comes from what is in the heart. [Draw an arrow from the heart and write the word "ACTION".]

What you do comes from what you love. Your actions show others what is in your heart. If you love what is right and good, you will do what is right and good. That would show others that you are a wise person.

[Show the WISDOM definition sign again; have the class read it out loud.]

What does the word “*foolishness*” mean? [Hold up the word FOOLISHNESS then a sign with the following definition:]

Foolishness is loving what is bad and wrong and doing it.

For example, being *selfish* and *mean* is wrong, isn't it?

- How would you act if you were *selfish* and *mean*?

If you are *selfish* that means that you love your self more than anyone else. That's what makes you mean to others; you have no love for them. You may act with kindness or generosity at times, but if you were selfish and mean you would not *usually* act kind or generous.

Remember what comes first: the heart [Point to the heart on the board.] The love of what is wrong comes first. Then the action comes from what is in the heart. [Point to the arrow coming from the heart to the word “ACTION”.]

What you do comes from what you love. If you are selfish and mean to others, it shows others that you are a foolish person.

[Show the FOOLISHNESS definition sign again and have the class read it aloud.]

Let's look at some examples of wisdom and foolishness in the Bible.

Sword Drill: 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. ²They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity. ³For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. ⁴They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem. ⁵They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do.

After Jesus resurrected from the dead, many people in Jerusalem came to believe that Jesus was God. But the Jews severely

persecuted the believers. The believers were treated with violence and anger. They were beaten and put in prison; many were killed, and many lost their jobs and any way to provide for their families. They were living in hiding and were in great poverty. So, while he was out on his third missionary journey, Paul collected money for the impoverished believers in Jerusalem. The churches in Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea) put together a generous offering to send down to the believers in Jerusalem. Even though the Macedonians were also going through trials and were also very poor, God *filled* their hearts *with abundant joy which overflowed in rich generosity*. And, they gave even more than Paul expected.

- What did the churches in Macedonia do – what action did they take? [Point to the word ACTION on the board.] (They gave as much as they could.)
- What did these people love? [Point to the heart on the board.] (They loved what was right and good: generosity!)

The people of Macedonia were not forced to be generous. They *wanted* to be generous; it was in their hearts to be generous.

- Were the people of Macedonia walking the *Way of the Wise* or the *Way of the Foolish*? (They loved what is right and good, and they acted on that love. They loved God, and their love for God overflowed in generosity to others.)

Right after Jesus was taken back up into heaven when the Christian church was just getting started, the believers shared with other believers because they loved God and loved what is right and good. They made sure everyone had what they needed. Sometimes they sold land or houses and brought the money to the church leaders who gave it to people with needs. They were walking in the way of wisdom, loving what is good and right. They were generous, kind, and compassionate.

At that time there was a couple called Ananias and his wife Sapphira who also sold some property to give the money to the church leaders.

But they fibbed. They told the church leaders that they were giving all the money they had gotten from the sale of their property, but really, they were holding back some of the money for themselves. They were pretending to be generous and kind.

God showed Peter that they had lied. Now, they didn't have to sell their property and they didn't have to bring all the money to the church leaders. They were free to do what they wanted with their land and their money.

But they pretended to be more generous than they really were just so that people would think more highly of them.

Sword Drill: Acts 5:3-4

Then Peter said, "Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself. ⁴The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us but to God!"

Ananias' lying and deception showed what was really in his heart. Ananias was walking the way of the foolish. He did not love truth and he acted dishonestly.

Let's see what happened to him...

Acts 5:5-6

As soon as Ananias heard these words, he fell to the floor and died. Everyone who heard about it was terrified. ⁶Then some young men got up, wrapped him in a sheet, and took him out and buried him.

God struck Ananias dead because of his foolish sin. Foolishness leads to destruction.

Acts 5:7-8

About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸Peter asked her, "Was this the price you and your husband received for your land?" "Yes," she replied, "that was the price."

His wife, Sapphira, also lied about the money and sinned against God. Let's see what happened to her...

Acts 5:9-10

And Peter said, "How could the two of you even think of conspiring to test the Spirit of the Lord like this? The young men who buried your husband are just outside the door, and they will carry you out, too." ¹⁰Instantly, she fell to the floor and died. When the young men came in and saw that she was dead, they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

God struck her dead, too. Sapphira walked in the way of the foolish, just like her husband.

What we love is the way we will act.

[Teacher, have the class re-read the definitions of Wisdom and Foolishness again.]

Loving what is good and right and doing it is walking in the way of wisdom; loving what is bad and wrong and doing that is walking in the way of the foolish.

What we believe is shown not by what we know or what we say we believe. What we believe is shown by what we do. The way we act shows what is really in our hearts.

Closing Prayer

Father, we have learned that wisdom is loving what is good and right and acting on that love. What we love is shown to others by what we do. I pray that you would give us a deep desire to always love what is right and good so that everything that we think or say or do will please You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Act out the story of Ananias and Sapphira.

Relay Race:

When a child gets to the far side of the room, he must say the definition of wisdom. Then he can run back and tag his teammate. Do the same with the definition of foolishness.

Sword Drills

For further discussion on the lesson objectives, have the children look up the following verses; then discuss them.

Sword Drill: James 3:13-18

If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don't cover up the truth with boasting and lying. ¹⁵For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. ¹⁶For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. ¹⁸And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.

[Teacher, discuss this passage with the children.]

Sword Drill: Proverbs 10:23

Doing wrong is fun for a fool, but living wisely brings pleasure to the sensible.

- Can you give an example of loving what is good and wise, and acting on that love? (Bringing a meal over to a sick friend.)
- Can you give an example of loving what is wrong, and acting on that love? (Stealing candy from the store.)

Sword Drill: Proverbs 20:11

Even children are known by the way they act, whether their conduct is pure, and whether it is right.

- Do only grown-ups show what they believe by their actions?
- How do our actions show what is in our hearts?
- Can you give an example of this?
- How can you tell what is in your heart by looking at your actions?

Sword Drill: Psalm 112:1

Praise the LORD! How joyful are those who fear the LORD and delight in obeying His commands.

- What does it mean to find delight in God's commands?
- How can you love what is good and right, and hate what is wrong?

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