
Forward

The *Way of the Wise* is a study for children on wisdom and foolishness. This curriculum contrasts the foolish person and the wise person by discussing the characteristics of each. It also teaches that the way of the foolish ends in destruction, but the way of the wise leads to life. This series uses the book of Proverbs to encourage children to pursue wisdom and to shun folly.

Lesson 1: *Jesus, the Sure Foundation* (Matthew 7). The first lesson begins by establishing a key difference between the wise and foolish person: Wise men listen to and obey the words of Jesus; foolish men do not listen to and obey the words of Jesus. Children will learn that those on a solid foundation are safe and will live, but those on a sandy foundation will perish. The lesson teaches that standing on a sure foundation is very important, but that everyone is born in sin on a sandy foundation. Jesus is the only sure foundation.

Lesson 2: *The Path that Leads to Life* (Proverbs 4). The second lesson illustrates that there are two paths in life. The *Way of the Wise* leads to heaven, and the *Way of the Foolish* leads to destruction. Students will see that the Bible warns us to follow the *Way of the Wise* and to avoid the *Way of the Foolish*. The lesson also teaches that Jesus is the only way to enter the *Way of the Wise*.

Lesson 3: *Wisdom and Foolishness* (Acts 4-5). The third lesson seeks to distinguish between wisdom and foolishness. Children will learn that wisdom is loving what is good and right and acting on that love, while foolishness is loving what is bad and wrong and acting on that love.

Lesson 4: *A Call to Wisdom* (various Proverbs). The fourth lesson focuses specifically on wisdom. Students will learn that wisdom is beautiful and brings happiness. Wisdom needs to be in the heart, not just in the head. They will also learn that those who are children of God are called to a life of wisdom.

I have designed these lessons to enable you to teach the Bible expositively. The idea is to have the kids read the passages in their own Bibles and the teacher explain the scriptures and give good practical applications that are age-appropriate. My goal is to ensure that children learn that God's Word is exciting and meaningful and that teachers teach sound doctrine!

Even though I've scripted the lessons, I don't expect teachers to read my lesson materials verbatim to the children as they teach. My lessons are meant to provide the details you need to get background information and some suggestions for child-oriented personal application. Once you know and understand the Bible lessons for yourself, you'll be ready to teach your class.

The two-column layout of this book is designed so that you can copy and cut the pages in half to fit into your Bible. When the children observe that you are teaching right out of the Bible, rather than from a curriculum book, it validates God's Word and gives your teaching more authority.

For additional lesson reinforcement ideas refer to *Tips and Tricks — Making Children's Bible Lessons Come to Life*, available from my website: <https://www.freechildrensministrylessons.com/>

I pray that you will use these lessons for God's glory by teaching the Bible as an entire plan by a systematic and connected study of the Word.

Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. (Mark 10:14)

Sheila Scroggins

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		The Path That Leads to Life	<i>Take hold of my instructions; don't let them go. Guard them, for they are the key to life. (Proverbs 4:13)</i>
		Wisdom and Foolishness	<i>Doing wrong is fun for a fool, but living wisely brings pleasure to the sensible. (Proverbs 10:23)</i>
		A Call to Wisdom	<i>My child, never forget the things I have taught you. Store my commands in your heart. (Proverbs 3:1)</i>

The Way of the Wise

Jesus is the Firm Foundation

Pre-Session Warm Up

[Teacher, before class prepare an envelope with a slip of paper in it that says, “Matthew 7:24-27”. Tape it on the wall above the level the children can reach.]

Who would like to try to get that envelope for me? [When the child determines that the envelope is out of his reach, give him a basketball to stand on.] This doesn’t work very well, does it? The ball keeps moving around. I don’t think the ball is a very good thing to stand on. What might be a better thing to stand on?

[Teacher, help the children to understand the importance of a good foundation.]

Today we begin a study about the differences between foolishness and wisdom. And the place to begin that is by understanding how important it is that we build our lives upon a firm foundation.

Opening Prayer

Father, wise men listen to and obey You; foolish men do not listen to and obey Your words. Teach us how important it is for us to base all of the decisions we make in our lives on Your Word. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

*For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—
Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:11)*

Lesson

[Teacher, ask the child to open the envelope and read the reference so that the class can look up the scripture.]

Matthew 7:24-27

“Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. ²⁵Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock. ²⁶But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. ²⁷When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.”

- How does the Bible describe the two kinds of men in the parable? (One was foolish and one was wise.)
- What foolish thing did the foolish man do? (He built a house with a bad foundation. The foolish man’s house may have been constructed well, but it was built on sand.)
- Where did the wise man build his house? (On a rock foundation.)
- What is the difference between a rock foundation and a sandy foundation? (Rock is stable, solid, firm, unchanging, not easily moved; sand is easily changed or washed away, unstable.)
- What happened to each house when the rain and waters came? (The house with the sandy foundation fell apart; the house with the rock foundation stood firm.)

[Teacher, show pictures of the two houses.]

- Why would a person build on a bad foundation? (He didn’t know how important a foundation is; he didn’t care about the foundation; he was in a hurry; he thought he knew how to build a house and didn’t care about the right way to build a house.)

A person who would build on a bad foundation is a foolish person; wise men don’t build on sandy foundations. Wise men build on rock foundations.

- What do you think happened to the two men? (the wise man was safe; the foolish man probably died.)
- In this story, who does the Bible say is the wise person? (Verse 24, The person who hears and obeys Jesus’ words.)

- So, what makes a person foolish? (Verse 26, Hearing the words of Jesus and disobeying them; not following Jesus. Both the wise and the foolish “hear” the words of Jesus but one obeys and one disobeys.)

This parable is the story of our lives. We are all either like the wise man or the foolish man. We are either building our lives on a bad foundation that is shaky and weak like the ball or the sand, or on a good foundation that is solid, firm and strong like the chair or the rock. Those with an unstable, weak or shaky foundation will be destroyed; those with a strong, solid foundation will live.

So, it’s important for each of us to have a firm foundation.

When Adam and Eve were first created, they had a perfect relationship with the living God. He was their Creator, Protector, and Provider—He gave them all they needed and told them to live in obedience to Him. He was their sure foundation. [Teacher, stand up on the chair.]

Then they sinned against God. They disobeyed God. They didn’t want to live in obedience to Him, so they rejected His rule over them and they lost their sure foundation. They did not listen to and obey God—they were foolish and instead of choosing God’s way, they chose the way of sin and selfishness and pride and disobedience.

Now every person is born in sin. Every person has turned away from God, the sure foundation.

[Teacher, show a box of sand to the children.]

Romans 5:12

When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.

Every person is born on a sandy foundation and will stay on that foundation unless he is rescued.

Romans 5:18-19

Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. ¹⁹Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

Just as sin came through one man, so rescue from sin and foolishness comes through one man—one man who obeyed God perfectly, one man who was without sin, one man who paid the price for the foolishness and disobedience and sin of undeserving sinners.

Jesus is God the Son and He died on the cross to take the punishment for sin and rescue man from his foolish, wicked heart and place him on a sure foundation. Through one man came sin, and through one man, Jesus, came salvation from sin.

[Teacher, show the Cross sign.]

1 Corinthians 3:11

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ.

- Does that mean that now everyone is on a sure foundation?

The sure foundation of Jesus’ payment for our sin is available to all, but many choose sin and foolishness instead of Jesus. Many trust in themselves, their good looks, their athletic ability, their money, or their talents instead of trusting in Jesus. Many continue in their sinful ways, loving sin and loving what is wrong instead of loving Jesus. Foolish people “turn away” from Jesus.

Wise people “grab onto” Jesus. Only those who turn away from their sin and grab onto Jesus have a sure foundation. Only the wise man who builds his life on the Word of God, who listens to and obeys God’s Word, and looks to Jesus for the power to turn away from sin and what is wrong, will be rescued from the sandy foundation.

Storms in Life:

- What are the storms that come into everyone’s life?
- What happens to people when “storms” in life hit?
- What kinds of “storms” do kids have?
- What different ways do kids react to those storms?
- How does your foundation hurt you or help you in the hard times?
- What does it mean to have Jesus as your foundation?
- How can you tell if Jesus is your foundation?

Closing Prayer

Father, there are so many foundations that people can build their lives on—money, good looks, athletic ability, popularity, and so forth. But any other foundation other than Jesus is like sand—it will easily crumble. Please help us to stand firmly on Your Word. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Choose Your Way —

On pieces of construction paper, make game squares using the words under each of the following categories, putting each word on a separate paper:

People	Places	Objects
Baby	Classroom	CD
Boy	Home	Milkshake
Dad	Park	Necklace
Girl	School hallway	Phone
Mom	Soccer field	Soccer ball
Pastor	Store	Sock
Teacher	Play yard	TV

1. Lay the game squares on the floor, placing each word in a category its own row: a row of people, a row of places, and a row of objects.
2. Volunteer walks or hops across the papers, stepping on one paper from each category. Then using the words he stepped on, the student makes up a story in which he or she might handle the situation God’s way. For example, if the child stepped on “Boy,” “Park,” and “Ball” he might say, “A boy at the park kicks a soccer ball and it hits an old man.” Have the class discuss how they might feel in that situation and what that boy should do.

Or, use the following review questions in a time of discussion or a game of your choice:

1. How does the Bible describe the two kinds of men in the parable? (One was foolish and one was wise.)
2. What foolish thing did the foolish man do? (He built a house with a bad foundation. The foolish man’s house may have been constructed as well as the wise man’s house, but it was built on sand.)

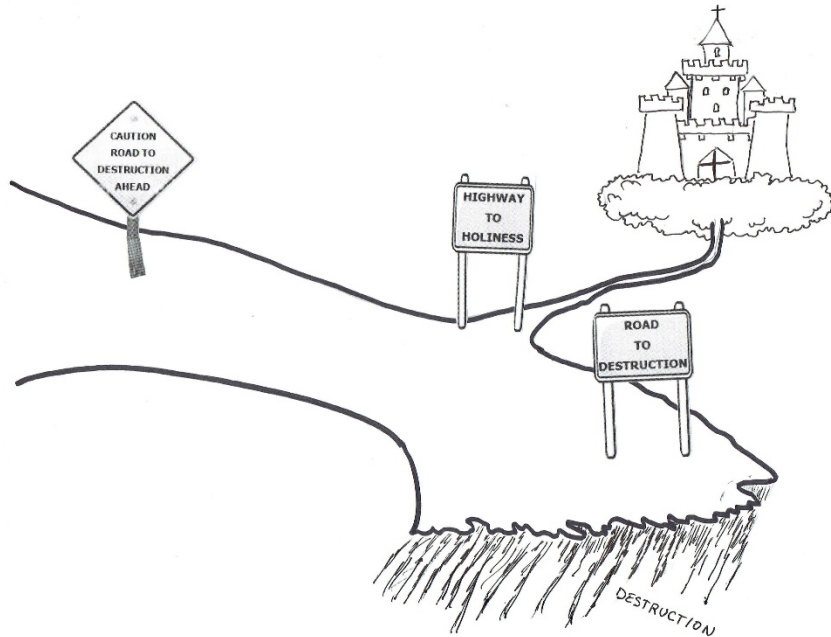
3. Where did the wise man build his house? (On a rock foundation.)
4. What is the difference between a rock foundation and a sandy foundation? (Rock is stable, solid, firm, unchanging, not easily moves; sand is easily changed or washed away, unstable.)
5. What happened to each house when the rain and waters came? (The house with the sandy foundation fell apart; the house with the rock foundation stood firm.)
6. Why would a person build on a bad foundation? (He didn't know how important a foundation is; he didn't care about the foundation; he was in a hurry; he thought he knew how to build a house and didn't care about the right way to build a house.)
7. What do you think happened to the two men? (the wise man was safe; the foolish man probably died.)
8. In this story, who does the Bible say is the wise person? (Verse 24) (The person who hears and obeys Jesus' words.)
9. So, what makes a person foolish? (Verse 26.) (Hearing the words of Jesus and disobeying them; not following Jesus. Both the wise and the foolish "hear" the words of Jesus but one obeys and one disobeys.)
10. What are some foundations people build their lives on? (Money, good looks, athletic ability, popularity, and so forth.)
11. Why are all foundations, other than Jesus, like a sand foundation? (They easily crumble.)
12. Why is a good foundation important?
13. What are the storms that come into everyone's life?
14. What happens to people when "storms" in life hit?
15. What kinds of "storms" do kids have?
16. What different ways do kids react to those storms?
17. How does your foundation hurt you or help you in the hard times?
18. Do you believe that everyone starts out on sandy soil? Why? (The Bible says that all men are sinners.)
19. What does it mean to have Jesus as your foundation?
20. Is Jesus your foundation?
21. How can you tell if Jesus is your foundation?

The Way of the Wise

The Path That Leads to Life

Pre-Session Warm Up

[Teacher, draw a simple map on the board showing a road that splits into two paths, similar to the following. Then lead the children in a discussion:]



- How many paths are on this map? (Two)
- Where does the narrow path go? (To Heaven and everlasting life.)
- Where does wide path go? (To destruction.)
- Can you get to heaven by way of the wide path? (No.)

- Suppose you thought that that the wide path leads to heaven because so many people were on it. Would you be correct? (No! Only the narrow path goes to heaven.)

It doesn't make any difference if you *think* that the wide path goes to heaven; it goes to destruction no matter what you think. You could try to get to heaven by the wide path, but you would not get there.

The Bible also talks about two paths we can take through life. Each path has a destination, a place where it leads, just like the narrow path goes to one place and the wide path goes to another place. The Bible tells us that there is only one way to get to Heaven and that is by way of Jesus. Jesus said that He is the way and that no one can come to the Father except through Him. [Show the Cross sign.]

Today we will be learning about these two paths in life.

Opening Prayer

Father, there are really only two paths in life, the path to eternal life with You and the path to destruction. Please help us to learn how to make wise choices in life so that we might stay on the path to heaven. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Take hold of my instructions; don't let them go. Guard them, for they are the key to life. (Proverbs 4:13)

Lesson

The Bible talks about two roads we can take through life. Each road has a destination, a place where it leads.

Sword Drill: Matthew 7:13-14

*"You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The **highway to hell** is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. ¹⁴But the **gateway to life** is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.*

- How many roads are there? (Two: the highway to hell and the gateway to life.)
- Describe the highway to hell. (Its gate is wide and lots of people choose that road.)
- Describe the gateway to life. (It is narrow and difficult, leads to God's Kingdom and only a few people ever find that road.)
- Why do you think that it says the highway to hell is broad? (To have room for lots of people.)
- Why are so many people on the highway to hell? (They don't listen to and obey God.)
- Why do you think that it says the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult? (Only a few people follow that road.)

Just like on our map, there are only two roads through life. Each road leads to only one place.

You cannot get to heaven on the broad road. The broad road leads to hell; the narrow road leads to heaven. We cannot change that.

The Bible calls the highway to hell, the *Way of the Foolish* and it calls the gateway to life, the *Way of the Wise*.

The prophet Isaiah talked about the Way of the Wise, too. He called it the *Highway of Holiness*.

Sword Drill: Isaiah 35:8-10

*And a great road will go through that once deserted land. It will be named the **Highway of Holiness**. Evil-minded people will never travel on it. It will be only for those who walk in God's ways; fools will never walk there. ⁹Lions will not lurk along its course, nor any other ferocious beasts. There will be no other dangers. Only the redeemed will walk on it. ¹⁰Those who have been ransomed by the LORD will return. They will enter Jerusalem singing, crowned with everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be filled with joy and gladness.*

- Who will walk on the Highway of Holiness? (Vs 8, it will be only for those who walk in God's ways. Vs 9, only the redeemed will walk on it.)

The "redeemed" are those who have been saved from sin through Jesus; those who are trusting in Jesus; those who have made Jesus the foundation of their lives. The only way to get on the *Way of the Wise* is through Jesus. He is our only sure foundation in life.

[Teacher, show HOUSE ON ROCK picture.]

- Who will NOT be walking on the Highway of Holiness? (Vs 8, Evil-minded people will never travel on it. Vs 9, Lions will not lurk along its course, nor any other ferocious beasts.)

[Teacher, show LION (or ferocious beast) picture.]

- Who are the evil-minded people? (Those who don't follow Jesus.)

The people on the *Way of the Foolish* are not trusting in Jesus. They have built their lives on a sandy foundation.

[Teacher, show HOUSE ON SAND picture.]

Only the children of God will walk on the *Way of the Wise* and they will be protected along the way.

Just like lions can attack and destroy our physical bodies, there are things that can attack and destroy our souls—our spiritual life—too.

- What are the lions and ferocious beasts? (Evil; things that could hurt us.)

Did you know that bad heart attitudes can hurt us? They can be like lions and ferocious beasts. What are some bad heart attitudes? (Pride, jealousy, and selfishness) When you are full of pride you become selfish, jealous, and mean.

People who tempt us to sin can be like the lions or ferocious beasts, too. Sometimes our friends try to pull us into sin with them.

Movies, television programs, and video games can also be like the lions or ferocious beasts because they can turn us away from God.

- How will the “redeemed” enter Jerusalem? (Vs 10, with joyful singing.)

Arriving in Heaven is going to be the most exciting thing you have ever experienced in life. God tells us in His Word what eternal life with Him will be like:

Sword Drill: Revelation 21:4

He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.

There will not be any sadness or crying in heaven.

Heaven will be a place of great joy and happiness.

- How long will the joy last? (Forever!)
- Will everyone receive this? (No.)
- Who is this for? (Only the “redeemed”.)
- How does someone become one of the “redeemed”? (By trusting in Jesus; by making Jesus the foundation of your life.)
- Is there any hope for someone who is not trusting in Jesus to get on the *Way of the Wise*? (Yes, if they ask Jesus to forgive them.)
- Are you one of the “redeemed”?

There are only two paths through life: The *Way of the Wise* and the *Way of the Foolish*. The *Way of the Wise* leads to heaven and the *Way of the Foolish* leads to hell and destruction.

You must choose which path you want to walk on in life!

Fire Alarm Illustration:

- What would you do if you heard a fire alarm go off? (Get out of the building.)
- Why? (You could get burned up if you don't get out of a burning building.)

A fire alarm is a warning. It tells us that there is danger. If we don't obey the fire alarm we could die.

- What would a foolish person do if he heard a fire alarm? (Ignore it.)
- What would a wise person do if he heard a fire alarm? (Obey it.)

The Bible has good advice and a warning for us about the two paths of life. The warning is like a fire alarm to us.

Sword Drill: Proverbs 4:10-15

My child, listen to me and do as I say, and you will have a long, good life. ¹¹I will teach you wisdom's ways and lead you in straight paths. ¹²When you walk, you won't be held back; when you run, you won't stumble. ¹³Take hold of my instructions; don't let them go. Guard them, for they are the key to life. ¹⁴Don't do as the wicked do, and don't follow the path of evildoers. ¹⁵Don't even think about it; don't go that way. Turn away and keep moving.

The Bible guides us in the *Way of Wisdom*. This passage tells you what to do and what NOT to do:

- What does it tell you to do?

Verse 13: *Take hold of my instructions; don't let them go. Guard them, for they are the key to life.*

- What do you think it means to “*Take hold of instructions*”? (Listen to God and obey His Word.)

If we truly treasure the teachings of the Bible we will stay on the *Way of the Wise*. God's Word will guide us in God's ways. We must BE WISE and hold on to the teachings of the Bible.

- What does it tell you NOT to do?

Verse 14: *Don't do as the wicked do, and don't follow the path of evildoers.*

Don't imitate the *Foolish*. Turn away from evil, stay as far away from it as you can. This is a warning from the Bible: Don't set foot on the *Way of the Foolish*. DON'T BE FOOLISH!

- What do wise people do with the warnings from the Bible? (They listen to and obey the Word of God.)

The Bible warns us to stay on the *Way of the Wise* and to avoid the *Way of the Foolish*. Wise people leave a building when they hear a fire alarm.

Closing Prayer

Father, we have learned today that there are two paths through life: The *Way of the Wise* and the *Way of the Foolish*. Your word warns us not to be foolish but to listen to Your Word and to obey it. Please help us to make wise choices in our life so that we might stay on the Highway to Heaven. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Activity Center

Show Me the Way

Have the children draw a map from their home to church. Discuss how the road you go on determines where you go.

Game Center

Use the following questions in a discussion or game of your choice:

1. Why is the highway to hell so wide? (Many choose that Way.)
2. What does it mean in Proverbs when it tells us not to even set our foot on the path of the wicked? (Don't give in to the temptation to sin.)
3. If you know you've been walking on the *Way of the Foolish*, how can you turn around and get back on the right path in life? (Confess your sins.)
4. Can you give any examples in your life where you needed to turn from the path of the wicked but didn't? That is, where you were tempted to sin.
5. Is there anything in your life that is tempting you away from the *Way of the Wise*? Do you have any friends that try to turn your heart away from God?
6. What do wise people do with warnings from the Bible? (They listen to and obey the Word of God.)
7. What keeps us from obeying God? (Pride, laziness, not caring about consequences.)
8. What would keep you on the *Way of the Foolish*? (The love of the world, pride, not knowing Jesus, wanting to be popular with the wrong type of friends.)
9. What is the good advice and the warning we learned from Proverbs 4:10-15? (Hold on to God's teachings and Don't be a fool.)
10. What does it mean to hold on to God's teaching? (Listen and obey.)

The Way of the Wise

Wisdom and Foolishness

Pre-Session Warm Up

[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?

The Way of the Wise

A Call to Wisdom

Pre-Session Warm Up

We have been learning that the Bible says there are only two roads in life: The *Highway of Holiness*, leading to heaven and eternal life with God; and, the *Road to Destruction*. If you want to be on the *Highway of Holiness*, then you are called to learn the wisdom of God.

[Teacher, ask the class what skill they are trying to achieve, i.e., piano, guitar, violin, basketball, soccer, etc.] Supposed you wanted to play on the basketball team at your school. Becoming a good basketball player would mean a call to some things and a call away from other things.

For instance, becoming a basketball player on the school team would be a call to practice dribbling and shooting baskets. But it would not mean just dribbling a few times. It would mean a call to hours of dribbling and shooting baskets every week.

It would be a call to run and do pushups to keep in shape so you are strong. Not just a few pushups, it would mean doing hundreds of pushups every day.

It would be a call to study the rules of basketball. It would be a call to get on the basketball team and play lots of basketball games.

It would also be a call away from some other things.

- What couldn't you do if you were on the school basketball team? What would it be a call away from?

Well, if you were on the basketball team you probably couldn't be in the school band or in gymnastics. You certainly couldn't be a "couch potato". You couldn't go home and watch a movie during the practices or go over to your friend's house when a game is scheduled.

In the same way, if we desire to be on the *Highway of Holiness*, then that's a call to something and a call away from something.

Opening Prayer

Father, none of us wants to be a fool. We all desire to be wise. Give us teachable hearts this morning. Show us the way to wisdom. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

My child, never forget the things I have taught you. Store my commands in your heart. (Proverbs 3:1).

Lesson

[Teacher, write the letters: **D O S M I W** on the board. Ask the children to unscramble the letters to find out what the word is.]

If you want to be on the *Highway of Holiness*, then you have a call on your life to go after **W I S D O M**. You are to love wisdom.

- What is the definition of Wisdom?

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

The book of Proverbs was written to prepare young men in Israel for positions in leadership. Thankfully, God has preserved this book down through the centuries so that we can learn the wisdom of God from it, too.

Right in the beginning of the book of Proverbs we are told why the book of Proverbs was written.

Sword Drill: Proverbs 1:1-6

¹These are the proverbs of Solomon, David's son, king of Israel. ²Their purpose is to teach people wisdom and discipline, to help them understand the insights of the wise. ³Their purpose is to teach people to live disciplined and successful lives, to help them do what is right, just, and fair. ⁴These proverbs will give insight to the simple, knowledge and discernment to the young. ⁵Let the wise listen to these proverbs and become even wiser. Let those with understanding receive guidance ⁶by exploring the meaning in these proverbs and parables, the words of the wise and their riddles.

- Why was the book of Proverbs written?

The book of Proverbs is full of wise sayings that show us what is right to do. Proverbs helps us understand how to act in godly ways, how to make decisions, and how to know what is best.

Phone Illustration:

[Teacher, show the children a piece of equipment or an appliance, such as a phone or a clock.]

- How could I find out how to set the time on this phone? [Show them the manual for it.]

The manual tells what all the parts are and how to use them. [Briefly demonstrate this by reading something from the manual and demonstrate how to put the instructions into practice.]

- Can this manual help me if I never open it?
- Is it a good idea to read the instructions and then not follow them?
No!

The company that made the phone knows how it works, and following the instructions will save you a lot of problems with the phone. It may even keep you from breaking it.

The book of Proverbs is like an instruction manual for life. Just like this manual shows us how to use the phone, the book of Proverbs tells us the right way to live. It gives us good instructions.

Just as it is not a good idea to read the instructions in the phone manual and then ignore them, it is not a good idea to read the life instructions in the book of Proverbs and then ignore them. The instructions the Bible gives are to be followed just like we follow the instructions in the manual.

Let's explore the meaning in some Proverbs:

Sword Drill: Proverbs 16:24

Kind words are like honey—sweet to the soul and healthy for the body.

- Why does this say that kind words are *healthy for the body*? (Kind words help make people feel happy.)

We are not just supposed to read these words, but we are to follow these instructions. We are to use kind words with each other.

Sword Drill: Proverbs 17:22

A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person's strength.

- Why does this say that a cheerful heart is good medicine? (Grumpiness makes everyone feel awful.)

If we just read this verse and ignore it by being grumpy, not only will we will feel awful, but we'll make everyone around us feel awful, too.

Sword Drill: Proverbs 15:1

A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare.

- What should you do when someone is angry with you? (Answer their anger with gentleness; that is, with kindness.)

When you return anger with kindness, it is a good way to help cheer up an angry person.

Proverbs are wise sayings that are generally true most of the time. Sometimes a gentle answer doesn't turn away anger. But this is a good thing to practice, because it usually works well.

Sword Drill: Proverbs 19:11

Sensible people control their temper; they earn respect by overlooking wrongs.

- What do we earn by controlling our tempers? (Respect)

Yelling back insults at another person is not living in the way that pleases God. When someone offends you, it is good to just ignore it if possible. Overlook their wrongs, just as you would want them to do to you.

You must read and DO what Proverbs tells us.

Sword Drill: Proverbs 1:8-9

*⁸My child, listen when your father corrects you. Don't neglect your mother's instruction. ⁹What you learn from them will **crown you with grace** and be a **chain of honor** around your neck.*

Notice that this last Proverb starts by saying, “*My child, listen when your father corrects you. Don't neglect your mother's instruction.*”

None of us are born with wisdom; we need to be taught what is wise and how to think wisely; we must learn how to make good choices. God has given your moms and dad an important job to do. Their job as parents is to teach you to love what is right and good and to want to do it. God expects your parents to teach you wisdom so that you'll know how to act and how to make good choices in life.

Crown of grace

This Proverb speaks of a *crown of grace*. This Proverb is saying if you listen to your mom and dad and do what is right and good, your life will be crowned with grace. You will have a good life full of joy and happiness.

Have you ever seen a girl wearing a beautiful wreath of flowers on her head? [Show picture of girl with a wreath of flowers in her hair.]

This Proverb is telling us that, just like a beautiful wreath of flowers on a girl's head, wisdom brings beauty to a person. Remember, *Wisdom is loving what is right and good, and doing it.*

Chain of honor

This Proverb also speaks of a *chain of honor around your neck*.

[Teacher, show the children two chains, a heavy-duty chain and a beautiful chain necklace.]

Which kind of chain do you think this verse is talking about?

Is it a heavy chain binding you and forcing you to follow the way of wisdom? Or is more like a gold medal awarded to someone for being the best?

[Show two pictures, one of a prisoner in shackles and one of Olympic gold-medal winners.]

You put a *chain of honor around your neck* as a decoration to make yourself look more beautiful. [Teacher, put a chain necklace around the neck of a girl in the class.]

This Proverb is saying that Wisdom is like a special necklace—it brings beauty to you. Whereas foolishness makes you look silly and it will imprison you.

Listening to, obeying, and loving the good things our parents have taught us, brings beauty and happiness into our lives and makes us beautiful to others. People of good character are admired by others.

The book of Proverbs is a collection of all these wise sayings that our parents are supposed to be teaching us. The Proverbs tell us how to live our lives in a way that pleases God.

Sword Drill: Proverbs 2:10

For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will fill you with joy.

- Where should wisdom be? (In your heart not just in your head.)

What this is saying is that we shouldn't just know these things in our heads, but we need to love wisdom so it is in our hearts.

- How can you get wisdom into your heart and not just in your head? (Loving wisdom and wanting to please God by doing what is right and good.)

Loving wisdom is wanting to obey the wise instruction of God; it is wanting to follow the good advice of your parents and wanting to do what is right. When you love what is good and right and wise, then all the teachings of wisdom are happy things to you. You want to learn more and more about the right way to do things; you want to become wiser and wiser so that you know how to make good choices, and so that you will make those good choices joyfully.

Unless Jesus gives us a love for what is good and right, the wise instruction of God and the good advice of parents feels like a strong binding chain [show the heavy-duty chain] instead of the beautiful chain necklace.

We are all born walking on the *Way of the Foolish*. Only Jesus can change our hearts so that we love wisdom.

If you are a child of God, you have a call to wisdom on your life. Wisdom is a beautiful thing that brings you happiness. But, remember, Wisdom needs to be in your heart; not just in your head.

Closing Prayer

Father, please help us all to gain a heart of wisdom, to love what is right and good and to want to do it so that we live lives that are pleasing to You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Wisdom Necklaces

Have the children braid thin pieces of ribbon as a "chain" to hold a pendant. (Or, link colored paper clips together). Make a heart-shaped "pendant" from heavy card stock and have them write one of the

Proverbs from today's lesson on it. Punch two holes at the top of the heart so that it will lie flat when it is threaded onto the ribbon chain.

Tell them that when they wear it, to remember that following the good teaching of their parents is like a beautiful necklace.

Proverbs Chains

Copy the Proverbs strips on colored paper and cut them apart.

Have the children make paper chains from the strips of Proverbs. Tell the children to tear off a link each day this week and read the Proverb.

Game Center

"Bowling" Game:

Write a brief description of a situation kids might experience on separate index cards. Tape each scenario card to toy plastic bowling pins or empty plastic bottles. Using a rubber ball, have the students line up behind a line. Each player gets two tries to knock a pin over. Lead student to discuss how they might react to the situation if they were wise and loved what is right and good, or if they were foolish and loved what is bad and wrong. Replace each card after it has been discussed. Continue the game until each student has a turn.

Ideas for scenarios:

- Your friend wants you to spray paint graffiti on the school ways.
- Someone called you a mean name in front of your friends.
- You threw a baseball and broke a neighbor's window.
- Your friend cheated in a game.
- Someone copied your answers during a test.
- Your friend wrecked your bike.

- You found a wallet with lots of money in it.
- Somebody stole money from you.

Or, use the following questions in a game of your choice:

1. Why do you think Proverbs 16:24 tells us that kind words are *healthy for the body*? (Kind words help make people feel happy.)
2. Why does Proverbs 17:22 tell us that a cheerful heart is good medicine? (Grumpiness makes everyone feel awful.)
3. What does Proverbs 15:1 tell us do to someone who is angry with us? (Answer their anger with gentleness and kindness.)
4. What does Proverbs 19:11 tell us we can earn by controlling our tempers? (Respect)
5. In Proverbs 1:8-9, what does it mean to listen to your father's instructions? (To obey your parents.)
6. Can you give me an example from your life of a time when you listened to your father's or mother's instructions?
7. Can you give me an example from your life of a time when you didn't listen to your father's or mother's instructions? What happened?
8. Do your parents' instructions and advice sometimes feel like a strong binding chain instead of a beautiful necklace? Why?
9. Where does Proverbs 2:10 say that wisdom should be? (In your heart not just in your head. We need to love wisdom; not just know about it.)
10. How can you get wisdom into your heart and not just in your head? (Loving wisdom and wanting to please God by doing what is right and good.)

