

Keep Wising Up

Ecclesiastes Part 14

Ecclesiastes 10:12-20 3-16-2014

Summary: Don't talk too much, and don't assume you know the future, or your words will end up ruining your life. But do speak when it is called for, and that will win you favor. Set goals and have a plan, and don't be lazy. Work hard and earn a living. And watch your thoughts, because they will eventually come out.

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10:12 The words from the mouth of a wise man are gracious, but the lips of a fool consume him. **13** The beginning of the words of his mouth is folly, but the end of his speaking is evil madness. **14** Yet the fool multiplies words. No one knows what will happen, and who can tell anyone what will happen after him? **15** The struggles of fools weary them, for they don't know how to go to the city. **16** Woe to you, land, when your king is a youth and your princes feast in the morning. **17** Blessed are you, land, when your king is a son of nobles and your princes feast at the proper time-- for strength and not for drunkenness. **18** Because of laziness the roof caves in, and because of negligent hands the house leaks. **19** A feast is prepared for laughter, and wine makes life happy, and money is the answer for everything. **20** Do not curse the king even in your thoughts, and do not curse a rich person even in your bedroom, for a bird of the sky may carry the message, and a winged creature may report the matter.

1) Introduction

The last few months we have been studying through the book of Ecclesiastes, and we left off last time in the middle of chapter 10. The closing chapters of this book are made up of assorted proverbs and wisdom sayings that give us insight into the way life tends to go so we can make wise decisions. There are eight of them in this chapter, and we looked at the first four last time:

- 1) When someone gets mad at you, stay calm
- 2) Expect trouble in life so you can prepare for it and roll with it when it happens.
- 3) Sharpen your ax. Get training, do some planning – work smart and have some systems in your life.
- 4) Use your ax. Know when it is time to stop planning and preparing and training and time to start springing into action before it's too late.

Those were the first four. The fifth one comes in verse 12.

2) Watch Your Mouth

12 The words from the mouth of a wise man are gracious, but the lips of a fool swallow him up. 13 The beginning of the words of his mouth is folly, but the end of his speaking is evil madness. 14 Yet the fool multiplies words.

Fools Talk too Much

Think of the three wisest people you know. How many of them are chatterboxes? Of all the people in this room who thought of all those wise people, it wouldn't surprise me if not one of you thought of someone who is known for being a motor mouth. Why? Because when you gain wisdom, one of the first things you figure out is that no matter how wise you are, a fair percentage of the things that come out of your mouth will be dumb. That is just a given. So wise people know that the best way to reduce the number of dumb things you say is by reducing the number of things you say altogether. And beyond that, wise people tend to think before they speak. Instead of just blurting out whatever thoughts come into their head, they actually process them first, because they know that almost never does anyone ever blurt out wisdom. To say something worthwhile requires some thought. And many times it requires so much thought that by the time you do think of the right thing to say, the conversation is already over. Or the subject has been changed. So if you are wise enough to actually think before you speak, very often you never even get the chance to say what you thought of because of the time you spent doing the thinking. That is another reason why wise people tend to talk less – they think *before* they speak. Semi-foolish people will think *while* they are speaking. Fully foolish people just speak *instead* of thinking, and so the flow of words just never stops. Plato was right: “Wise men speak because they have something to say. Fools speak because they have to say something.”

Over-Talking Ruins Your Life

And the result of that is his words **swallow him up** (v.12). All those words become a huge pit that he ends up falling into. Many people are ruining their life – not with too much alcohol, not by gambling all their money away, not by getting hooked on drugs, but by chattering their way into constant trouble. If you talk a lot, some of what comes out of your mouth will be gossip – it is inevitable. And some of what comes out of your mouth will be exaggeration, or some form of dishonesty. Some of it will reflect misinformation. Some of it will end up being the wrong word at the wrong time that you just walk away thinking, “Why can't I learn to keep my big mouth shut?”

Every one of us says dumb things, dishonest things, hurtful things, incorrect things, poorly timed things – all of us. And so the more we talk the more of those kinds of things we say, and those kinds of things cause lots of problems for us. They swallow us up. They make people mad at us, they make people think we are stupid, they make people not trust us, they make people treat us poorly. And the fool just keeps the stream of words going until finally he has said enough of those kinds of things to where all his relationships are ruined, he loses his job, and he gets into one problem after another because of his mouth.

You Don't Know the Future

And in many cases, fools do that because they always think they know what is going to happen. They don't understand all the variables that exist in life, and so they come up with these simplistic plans and just assume everything is going to go just as they planned. It is like listening to your 14-year-old describe all his amazing plans. “I'm going to do this, then this will happen, then I'm going to do this...” and when he is all done you are thinking, “Ok, there are about a dozen parts of that plan that could go totally wrong, and each one of them would throw the entire plan off.” But until you have some wisdom, you just don't know any better. You think you know what is going to happen.

14 ...No one knows what will happen, and who can tell anyone what will happen after him?

When wise people make plans, they take into account the possibility that things might not go as expected, and they work that into their plan. But fools are like the guy in James 4 who says **today or tomorrow I will go to this city or that city, spend a year there, do business, and make money.** They think they have it all figured out, and they assure everyone around them that their prediction is going to be right on.

Presumptive Spending

That is why fools so often spend money they don't have. They think they know the future.

"Oh, I'm getting this job – it's a done deal. The guy at the interview made it clear – it's mine if I want it. And so I just signed the papers on a loan for a new truck, because I'll easily be able to afford it with this new job."

Fools are so quick to think something is a done deal, because they never foresee any problems. The wise man knows that no matter how sure it seems, a lot of things could go wrong between now and the time when he will actually have all this money. So he does an unheard of thing – he waits until he actually has the money before he spends it. But fools blather on and on about how sure they are about the future and all their blathering digs them into holes they can never climb out of. That is what it is like for the fool. His foolish words swallow him up.

Speak Well

Some of you hear all that and say, "Ok that's it - I'm never talking again." Or some of you, who don't like to talk – you are shy or introverted or whatever, and so you are just naturally quiet, you hear all that and say, "Yes! That's perfect! Next time my wife is badgering me about wanting to talk I'll say, 'I'm just being wise!' and I'll go back to watching TV." For some of you, talking is a lot of work. It is hard for you to put thoughts into words – especially when you are tired, so the idea of not talking sounds great to you. But the truly wise person is not like that either. Look at verse 12 again.

12 The words from the mouth of a wise man are gracious

The ESV says **The words of a wise man's mouth win him favor.** The word can be translated either way (**gracious** or **winning favor**), but either way, it is clear that the wise person does speak. I think the ESV gets it right here because of the contrast in the second half of the verse. The opposite of this word is being swallowed up. The fool's words swallow him up and ruin his life, but the wise person's words win him favor. The wise man does not just clam up. He speaks, and his words win him favor – in the eyes of people and in the eyes of God.

Sometimes you need to speak up. When are those times? Usually they are the times when the fools are finally quiet. Those moments when someone just gossiped, and no one is standing up for the person who was just gossiped about. Those moments when God has just been blasphemed, and someone needs to speak up. Those moments when someone has just propagated an unbiblical doctrine and everyone in the room is being led astray. Those moments when there is a problem that needs to be addressed, but no one is speaking up because they know that whoever speaks up is going to have to take responsibility or leadership. It is those moments when someone is really hurting and needs encouragement from God's Word, but none of the fools know the Bible well enough to think of anything. Those times when your wife needs someone to talk to, and she needs you to share your soul with her, but you are tired and would really just rather surf the web. Those are the moments when wise people speak up and fools clam up. And just as the fools run into all kinds of trouble in life because of their words, wise people receive all kinds of benefits in life because of theirs. Things will go well with you. Things will go better for you at work, at church, at home – all kinds of wonderful benefits come your way when you learn to speak wisely.

Examine Your Speech

Just like the doctor who can diagnose health issues just by looking at your tongue, so you can diagnose spiritual health by your tongue. If you want to live a life of wisdom, you will never stop examining your speech to see what it reveals about your heart. And you will never stop striving to become more and more godly in your speech. Because that is one area where none of us ever get it mastered. Paul Tripp puts it well in his book War of Words:

Listen to the talk that goes on in your home. How much of it is impatient and unkind? How often are words spoken out of selfishness and personal desire? How easily do outbursts of anger occur? How often do we bring up past wrongs? How often do we fail to communicate hope? How often do we fail to protect? How often do our words carry threats that we have “had it” and are about to quit? Stop and listen, and you will see how much we need to hold our talk to this standard of love, and how often the truth we profess to speak has been distorted by our sin.¹

There is no better test of the heart than our words.

3) Have a Plan

15 The struggles of fools weary them, for they don't know how to go to the city.

The struggles of fools weary them. Fools get tired a lot because they walk without knowing where they are going.

“Where are you going?”

“Town.”

“Do you know where that is?”

“No.”

“Oh. Well, how is it going?”

“I’m worn out.”

Fools get really weary and tired and bogged down in their work because they do not have a clear understanding of direction. They are trying to do something, but they don’t even know for sure what it is they are really trying to do. If you are going to live a life of wisdom, you are going to need a plan. Life is like hunting – if you don’t aim at anything you don’t hit anything.

Is there something in your life you would like to change and you say, “I’m working on it.”?

“I’m working on become more ____ or less ____.”

“I know that’s a bad habit – I’m working on changing it.”

“I’m working on my marriage.”

You are working on this, working on that, but the reality is, you have been “working” on it for the last five years and nothing has changed. Maybe it is time to actually sit down and make a plan. So often, “I’m working on it” means nothing more than “I want this thing in my life to change.” But that is as far as it goes. There is no plan.

Wise people realize that almost nothing gets accomplished that way. Imagine we decided we wanted to build a new building out in our field, and we took the same approach that so many people take with solving the problems in their character – just a vague, undefined approach of everybody just sort of “working on it” – so every time you see the field you think, “Man, we really need to get that building up,” and once in a while you get really motivated and say, “You know what, I’m bringing a 2X4 to church today!” and here and there someone goes out there and pounds a few nails – will there ever be a church building? No – never. You have got to have a plan. You cannot pour a slab and then put up framing and drywall and then all of a sudden think, “Oh ... plumbing!” We all understand that when it comes to building buildings or starting up a school or even planning a vacation. But somehow we forget that principle when it comes to spiritual projects. Some people put more planning into remodeling their

¹ P.229.

kitchen or planning a vacation than they put into the most important issues of life. You want your communication to get better? You need a better system for getting housework done? Men, this is part of what it means to be a leader in your home. Establish some measurable, realistic goals, and then think through which action steps will be likely to bring you to those goals.

What systematic plan do you have to reach your spiritual goals? Have you thought through some steps? Or are you like the fool who thinks, “As long as I just walk long enough, I will arrive at the city eventually”? No you won’t. You have to know where the left and right turns are if you want to actually get there.

What about your ministry? Sometimes we find ourselves doing things just because we were asked, but no one ever explained to us what the purpose is. And now, three years later, you are still doing that ministry even though it is not even needed anymore. Doing a job that you don’t know the reason for can be an incredibly wearying thing. We get our energy for our work by seeing the purpose and making progress toward the goal. When you don’t know the purpose or the goal, the work just becomes monotony, and even if it is easy work, it drains you and wearies you. Make sure you know the purpose of a task before taking it on.

4) Don’t Be Lazy

16 Woe to you, land, when your king is a youth and your princes feast in the morning. 17 Blessed are you, land, when your king is a son of nobles and your princes feast at the proper time-- for strength and not for drunkenness.

Banquets are great, but not in the morning. It is a cliché even in the world – you know you have a drinking problem if you find yourself drinking in the morning. Morning is when you need to get up and go to work and earn a living. Save your partying until after work.

You know fools are in charge when government officials using taxpayer money to party and get drunk instead of working. But when wise people are in charge, they might still have a feast, but it is for strength, not drunkenness. If you enjoy the right amount of good food, it strengthens you – physically, as well as giving an emotional boost. That is the purpose of food. We eat and drink for both physical and emotional strength. That is what wise people use food and drink for. But fools overeat, get drunk, try to turn every day into some kind of party, and the result is laziness.

He talks about feasting in verses 16, 17, and 19, but in the middle of all that is verse 18, which is about laziness. That is included right in the middle of talking about feasting because there is a connection between laziness and gluttony. Someone works a hard, manual labor job all morning, sits down for a good, hearty lunch – fuels up, and he is ready to go for the rest of his day. He is strengthened. But what happens when we abuse food? When we abuse food, we are weakened by it. We overeat, eat garbage, drink too much, overindulge – and what happens? Are you stronger or weaker? Do you feel like going out there and doing a bunch of work after you pig out? No, you feel like taking a nap. It takes all the energy you have just for your body to convert all that extra food into fat. The wise man eats for fuel, so he can work. The fool goes out and buys elastic pants, and then tries to get his money’s worth out of them by seeing if he can use up every bit of the elastic. And people who do that tend to become lazy and then their life starts to fall apart all around them.

The Folly of Laziness

18 Because of laziness the roof caves in, and because of negligent hands the house leaks.

You can spot a fool’s house just by driving by.

“Oh, a fool lives there.”

“How do you know?”

“Look – it’s obvious.”

Wisdom goes to Home Depot. The first ten years of my marriage I tried to get by with duct tape. But eventually I realized I was going to have to start going to Home Depot. When we bought our first house I thought I could keep up with it with just a few minutes here and there without having any time in my weekly schedule actually devoted to taking care of things that needed doing around the house. I was wrong. Tracy would get frustrated because I would never get around to fixing anything. I always thought, “I don’t have time right now, but I’m fully planning on getting to that.” I think procrastination has ruined more houses than anything else.

One of the biggest turnarounds in my life in the area of laziness was one day when I was about to put something off and I stopped and asked myself, “When would I ever actually do this?”

“Oh, I need to take care of that ... but not right now.”

Ok, but if not now, then when? You see something that needs to be done – something is lying on the floor. It needs to be picked up and put away.

“I’ll do it – just not right now.”

Then when? When can you picture yourself deciding, “Alright, now is the time for me to go pick that thing up and put it away?” And the answer was clear – never. I didn’t have any time set aside in my routine for that sort of thing. If you find yourself saying, “Not right now,” ask yourself, “Why not right now? What’s wrong with right now? Is there really going to be a time in the near future that is going to be so much better than right now?”

“But I just don’t feel like doing it right now.”

What do you think is going to happen? You are going to wake up tomorrow morning and say, “Ah, NOW I feel like doing that unpleasant chore!”? If you say, “Why not right now?” and the answer is just, “I don’t feel like it” – never let yourself off the hook with that answer. If the answer is, “It would be unwise to do it right now because I would have to neglect something more important,” that’s one thing. But if the answer is, “I just don’t want to” – that is the lamest answer there is. That answer is a one-way ticket to living the life of a fool.

Laziness is one of those things that never deliver what it promises. It promises you comfort and ease. That is why we are lazy – because we want comfort and ease. But it doesn’t work.

Proverbs 15:19 The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns.

The lazier you get, the harder everything becomes. Every little task is blocked with thorns. If you are up and moving and working hard – maybe out in the back yard planting a tree or doing some really labor intensive work with your hands and you realize you need to bring a load of dirt from the front yard, it’s no problem. But when you are being lazy – sitting on the couch, into my third straight hour of TV, I suddenly realize I need some potato chips, but ... I just don’t feel like getting up. So I wait for one of the kids to walk through and tell them to get them for me, because I don’t have enough self-discipline to stand on my feet and walk ten steps. The harder you work, the easier work becomes. As long as you are up and moving and working, it is no big deal to do one more thing. But the lazier you are, the harder everything becomes.

Not only that, but when you are lazy, very often you find yourself doing work that ends up being wasted.

Proverbs 26:15 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth.

That proverb is a comical picture that highlights the folly of doing half the work for none of the benefit. How often do we do that? We start a task, it gets hard so we take a break – for nine months, and we procrastinate so long that by the time we do finally get back to it, we have to start all over from the beginning. So that initial work ends up being a total waste. Lazy people waste a lot of energy doing half the work for none of the benefit because they are too lazy to ever finish anything.

That is why lazy people usually are not very happy people. They don’t find the life of comfort and ease that they want, because even though they are barely doing anything, that tiny bit they are doing feels harder than the hard work that wise people are doing. Plus, they just feel like a slug. God planted in us a

craving to be productive. And when we are lazy, we get to the end of the day with an unfulfilled feeling because deep down we know that we were made to be productive. And when you get to the end of the day having accomplished nothing, that does not feel good. Not to mention you can't get to sleep because you didn't work hard enough to actually get tired. So you stay up later and later, and sleep in longer and longer, and you are tired all the time, and it turns into a vicious cycle.

Fighting Laziness

I have found that for me, the key to beating back laziness in my life is two-fold. First, have a plan – that point he made in the previous section. For me, I have to have schedules, systems and routines – otherwise there is a 100% chance I will fall into laziness. And second, value hard work. Keep reminding yourself that hard work is a good thing. It is just healthy in general, and it is pleasing to God. Develop an attitude that says:

- In general, my approach to life is to do the hardest things first.
- If you see something that needs doing, if you can possibly do it right now, do it. Put procrastination off until tomorrow – you don't have time for it today.
- Persevere beyond that point where your flesh wants to stop. "I feel like taking a break now – I'll go 15 more minutes."
- And chip away at large tasks. If you have some giant task – do some of it every day.

It is incredible what you can accomplish in a year if you do a little every day. If your garage is a nightmare – if you chip away every day, even for a few minutes, so that it is a little better at the end of each day than it was at the beginning – eventually it will get done. If you work on laundry every single day, you probably won't ever have to spend more than about 15 minutes. If you are in school, and a huge project is due at the end of the semester, work on it every day. When I was in college, on the first day of class I would get the syllabi and find out what all was going to be required, and I made a chart. Read one half a page from that book each day, work on that paper for 20 minutes each day, read a page of that book each day, etc. I had to do it that way because I am such a poor reader I can't stay with one book for more than a page or two at a time without my mind wandering. That system made it so never one time all the way through college or graduate school did I ever pull an all-nighter. And I never had to ask for an extension. All the papers were done, projects done, assignments done on time – just because I had that system. And it was a piece of cake, because I only had to do tiny little bits at a time. Anybody here have a list of books you would love to read someday? They say the average person reads about 250-300 words per minute. Let's take the low end of that – the slower readers. At 250 words per minute, if you could carve out just 20 minutes a day to read, six days a week. That would be about 4000 pages per year, which is 15 average-sized books – every year. Think of how you could sharpen your ax if you did even half that much.

Earn Money

And if all that does not convince you to fight against laziness in your life, in verse 19 he really makes it simple for us.

19 A feast is prepared for laughter, and wine makes life happy, and money is the answer for everything.

You need money in order to eat and drink. Even if you did want to be lazy, and just sit around and feast in the morning and laugh and giggle your shallow life away² – you would need money to do it. Even if your idea of a great life is to play video games all day, still, if you want the electricity to stay on, at some point you are going to have to get off the couch and go to work and earn a paycheck. And woe to the foolish parent who waits too long to teach his kids that principle. Give your kids a portrait of a wise

² I take the feasting and laughing here in a negative sense because of the context of laziness, and also because the word laughter is used several other times in the book, and always in a negative sense – for the foolish, shallow, cackling laughter of fools.

person that is attractive to them – that they want to strive to emulate. Live out for them a picture of a wise person who knows how to use food and drink properly – to gain strength and joy, not to get drunk and become lazy. Someone who doesn't love money, who doesn't worship money, but who does understand the value of a dollar. It is worth setting aside comfort and working hard in order to get some dollars – not for luxury.

James 5:1 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. ...5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.

We do not want to be in that group on Judgment Day. But nor do we want to get to Judgment Day and hear God say, "You wicked, lazy servant. I gave you all these resources and you didn't utilize them."

Money can be an incredibly powerful tool in the hands of a wise man or woman. For one thing, you need money to take care of your family. 1 Timothy 8 says if you don't provide for your family you have denied the faith and are worse than an unbeliever. Even atheists feed their families.

And if you are a young man in high school, you need to know that you don't just go right from playing video games to being able to support a family. One of the most disheartening things for a lot of young men is when they realize that in order to support a family they will have to earn way more than minimum wage. In most cases you cannot do it with unskilled labor. That means learning a trade. A young man goofs around just having fun, then one day he meets the girl of his dreams, and finds out that it is a little late to start thinking about how he can support her. He wants to get married, but he is years away from being able to earn enough to support a family. And if that girl is smart, she will move on to someone else at that point. If she happens to be my daughter she will ask if you earn at least \$40,000 a year with plans for advancement, and if the answer is no, don't expect a call back.

So money is helpful for paying bills and providing for your family. It is also helpful for helping others.

Ephesians 4:28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

We need to work hard enough to not only pay our bills, but to help others who are in need. Not only that, money is useful for getting people into heaven.

Luke 16:9 I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

That is talking about using your money for missions and evangelism. Use your money in such a way that when you get to heaven there are a whole bunch of people there who walk up to you and say, "Thank you for the way you used your money on earth. I'm here because of your money." You hear about these opportunities to reach people with the gospel – like the short wave radio thing Bob told you about at corporate prayer. There are over a billion short wave radios in the world – most of them in third world countries – many of them in places where there are no other options for hearing the gospel, and we could put a half-hour broadcast on the air five days a week for a year for something like \$23,000. You hear about opportunities like that, and you want to support them, but it takes money. Money is one of God's most versatile temporal gifts, and wise people know how to take advantage of that. Ok, one more principle in verse 20.

5) Watch Your Mouth

20 Do not curse the king even in your thoughts, and do not curse a rich person even in your bedroom, for a bird of the sky may carry the message, and a winged creature may report the matter.

"Wait, 'Watch your mouth' appears twice in the list."

Yeah, I noticed that too. I guess he thinks that's important. In a list of eight principles you need to live a wise life, two of them are about controlling the tongue. That should tell us something. But this time he does not just tell us to control our speech – this time he tells us how. Underline that phrase **even in your thoughts**.

Not Even in Your Thoughts

Did you know that complaining is forbidden even in your thoughts? Even if you never open your mouth once, you can still be guilty of the sin of complaining because complaints that are just in your mind are still heard loud and clear in heaven. And sooner or later they will come out of your mouth anyway, so the key to controlling the tongue is controlling the thoughts. If your thoughts and words are such that you have to really be careful who is listening, that is not a good thing. If you have to look around first before saying what is really on your mind, eventually you are going to get yourself in trouble because no matter how careful you are, the way you really feel is going to become known. People will figure it out. You will slip in your speech, your mannerisms will give it away, your attitudes and actions – you won't be able to hide it. The goal is to get to the point where you don't have anything to hide. Whatever you are thinking – if people could see it, that would be a good thing. If your spouse could read your thoughts, they would be honored. So we could change this last point – instead of “Watch Your Mouth” to “Watch Your Thoughts.”

Most of you have heard Job 31:1 quoted many times. But what is really powerful in this passage is the next three verses.

Job 31:1 I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.

“Great. Sounds like a great plan. Problem is, I've done it 1000 times, but I still can't seem to control my eyes when there is a pretty girl who isn't dressed modestly.”

What is the secret to actually following through on that covenant?

2 For what is man's lot from God above, his heritage from the Almighty on high? 3 Is it not ruin for the wicked, disaster for those who do wrong? 4 Does he not see my ways and count my every step?

Take careful note of those last two words – **every step**. Did you know that your thoughts are steps in some direction? Most people think that they are not taking any actual steps in life until they speak or act. But Job understood that if he entertained certain thoughts – those are steps in the direction of impurity. Your thoughts are movement. They move you along in life in some direction. What direction are your thoughts going most of the time? So often people are wrestling with some sin, and they think, “Man, I try and try to stop, but I never have success!” But if you could see into their mind, you would see that their thoughts have been going in that direction the whole time. They entertain that sin in their mind for two minutes – that is two minutes of traveling in the direction of that sin. Then later for five or ten minutes. Then again later. And by the end of the day, if they could turn around and see their footprints from the time they woke up until evening, they would see the tracks moving in the direction of that sin most of the day. Then when the opportunity arises to act on that sin, they cave in every time. And they are shocked.

“I resolved to quit, but I keep doing it.”

But if they looked at the footprints of their thoughts, they would see that it makes perfect sense. If you walk toward a destination all day long, don't be shocked when you actually arrive at that destination. That is why Romans 13:14 says **clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh**. Instead, set your mind on things above, and whatever is true, noble right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy – think on those things, because the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.

Conclusion

If we subject our minds to the influence of the Holy Spirit through His Word, the more we do that, the more our words and actions will win us favor rather than swallow us up. As you strive to live a life of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, control your thoughts, control your words, have a plan, and don't be lazy, when someone gets mad at you, stay calm, expect trouble in life so you can prepare for it and roll with it when it happens, sharpen your ax, and use your ax, and when you stand before the Lord on Judgment Day He will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Benediction: 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15 And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

Application Questions (James 1:25)

- 1) Is there a particular area where your mouth seems to get you into trouble the most? (Angry speech, impulsive promises, storytelling, gossip, boasting, arguing, joking, swearing, etc.)
Ask the group to help you think of strategies for changing the thoughts that lead to those words.
- 2) Which area of your life is most in need of some planning or organization?
- 3) In which areas of your life do you struggle most with laziness?