

Navigating Relationships: Wise, Foolish, and Evil People

Leadership Teaching

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Ignite Church

I. Navigating Relationships with God's Wisdom

- A. Leaders are always growing in relationship with God and navigating relationships with people
- B. Leaders live in a heightened kind of tension between the two
 - 1. Theological truth: All people are created in God's image and are to be treated with equal dignity, value, and worth (Gen. 1:26-27; Ps. 8:4).
 - 2. Relational reality: Not every person is equally safe, healthy, or trustworthy
 - 3. Tension: How do we honor people's inherent value as God's image-bearers while protecting ourselves and others?
- C. The Bible (especially the Wisdom Literature) groups people into three categories and gives wisdom for navigating each of these three types of people:¹
 - 1. Wise people
 - 2. Foolish people
 - 3. Evil people
- D. Biblical solution for navigating relationships: **walk in the Spirit's wisdom.**

II. Wise People

- A. Characteristics
 - 1. Not necessarily most intelligent
 - 2. Humble, godly, teachable, open, and responsible
 - 3. Change their actions and attitudes to align with what is good and true
 - 4. Welcome correction
 - 5. Consider more than just their own feelings and desires in a situation
- B. Biblical Examples of the Wise
 - 1. Deut. 34:9 – Joshua was full of the spirit and wisdom
 - 2. Dan. 5:11, 14 – Unbelievers recognized Daniel's wisdom
 - 3. Luke 2:52 – Jesus grew in wisdom
 - 4. Acts 6:3 – Early Church leaders were full of the Spirit and wisdom
 - 5. Acts 6:10 – Stephen possessed wisdom and the Spirit
- C. Respond to the Wise With More
 - 1. More time, energy, and relationship
 - 2. Why? Because they honor what you invest (**Proverbs 9:8-9**)

¹ This teaching was adapted from the book, *Spirit-Filled Jesus: Live by His Power*, by Mark Driscoll. To purchase the book or to access additional resources on the subject, visit spiritfilledjesus.com. You can also find helpful leadership resources and Bible teaching at Mark's website: markdriscoll.org.

III. Foolish People

A. Characteristics

1. Not necessarily less intelligent
2. Unteachable, defensive, unyielding, arrogant, irresponsible, prone to excuse-making and blame-shifting
3. Fight or flight response to correction
 - a) The more you address the areas in which a foolish person keeps making the same error, the more *conflict increases* and the more the *relationship deteriorates*.
4. Waste what is given to them because they do not honor or embrace it

B. Biblical Examples of the Foolish

1. The Life of Peter in the Gospels
 - a) Peter began as Jesus' most foolish disciple, but through wise rebuke and relationship, Jesus invited Peter to walk with Him toward wisdom.

C. Respond to the Foolish With Less

1. Less time arguing, less frequently having the same conversation, less taking responsibility for them
2. Foolish people push their responsibilities and consequences of their folly onto responsible people.
 - a) Best thing you can do is push the responsibilities and consequences back onto them:
 - (1) This preserves your life energy.
 - (2) This protects you and others.
 - (3) This causes them enough grief to be motivated to make life changes.
 - b) **Prov. 26:3; 10:13**

IV. Evil People

A. Characteristics

1. Intentionally plot harm, scheme to bring destruction
2. Feel vindicated in causing harm because of their own hurt, self-righteousness, and corrupt nature
 - a) Hurting people hurt people; broken people break people
3. Satisfaction in causing others pain, loss, shame, and fear
4. Motivated by jealousy and pain

B. Biblical Examples of the Evil

1. Judas Iscariot was Jesus' Evil Disciple (Matt. 26)
2. Babylon (Hab. 1:5-11)

C. Respond to the Evil With Nothing

1. Opposite of our response with the wise person
2. Draw near to the wise and run from the evil
3. An evil person is probably beyond your ability to help, but not beyond God's.
4. Separate from, protect against, and put an end to the relationship with the evil person
 - a) **Prov. 1:15-18; 2:12-15**

V. Six Kinds of Relationships

A. Wise + Foolish = Parental Relationship

1. The wise one acts like a parent, and the foolish like a child
2. Example: the wife gets frustrated at her irresponsible husband

B. Wise + Evil = Distant Relationship

1. Evil people do not love people, they use people.
2. Jesus kept distance from evil people, we should too.

C. Foolish + Foolish = Codependent Relationship

1. Two foolish people multiply their foolishness.
2. How do we respond? Encourage this relationship toward wisdom

D. Foolish + Evil = Abusive Relationship

1. Foolish people are easy prey for evil people.
2. Example: foolish young woman in romantic relationships with evil men

E. Evil + Evil = Dangerous Relationship

1. Two barrels on a gun: if you stand in front of it, you will probably get shot.
2. Demonic partnership (Acts 5 – Ananias and Sapphira)
3. Usually two evil people have been hurt and bond over mutual hurt
 - a) *Evil people feel justified in hurting others because they themselves are hurting.*

F. Wise + Wise = Healthy Relationship

1. This is God's design for wholistic human thriving

G. We cannot avoid foolish or evil people—they are everywhere.

1. Walk with wise people and keep in step with the Spirit in relationship to navigate those difficult relationships (Prov. 13:20).
2. Walking in the Spirit's wisdom, Jesus had healthy relationships with all kinds of people.

Discussion Questions

1. Are you more wise, foolish, or evil in your current relationships?
2. Which characteristics of the wise, foolish, and evil person most stand out to you?
3. How can you take the principles from this teaching and apply it in your leadership context? Your family context?
4. How can you actively invite the Spirit to help you know yourself and others accurately so that you can be healthy relationally?
5. Which of the six kinds of relationships do you most often find yourself in?