



Ecclesiastes 10:1-11

"Wisdom and Folly"

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Transcript

23:07

So I'm going to invite you guys to make your way to Ecclesiastes 10. We're going to be in Ecclesiastes 10 this week. And while you guys are making your way there, I want to offer you an encouragement because this week, our passage is an incredibly difficult section of Ecclesiastes that a lot of people, the commentators, as I was studying and you know, I kind of read through it and went, hmm, okay... looking for a single theme that kind of runs through all of this.

23:35

And so I went to look at what other pastors and other scholars have said. You know what? It's always helpful when you go open the book and go, all right, what do these guys have to say?

23:45

And a couple of them just said, and Proverbs 10 and 11 have some random thoughts about some stuff, basically is what it said. You know, lots of little individual ideas about little individual things that pop up in these verses, but there was very little in regard to the whole big picture theme.

24:02

What is this chunk of scripture talking about? But, you know, we've got these proverbial statements that we're going to look at. All these little short statements that contrast the difference between wisdom and folly and foolishness as we've seen this theme kind of show up several different times throughout scripture.

24:19

But I think chapter 10 and the beginning of chapter 11 just do a great job of just laying it all out there one last time before we get to the end of the book. So we're going to read from Ecclesiastes 10.

24:29

We're going to look at verse 1 all the way through verse 11. I think you guys are there at this point. So we're going to read our passage together and then jump into it a little bit this morning. Starting in verse 1, it says, dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off a stench.

24:43

So a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor. A wise man's heart inclines him to the right, but a fool's heart to the left. Even when the fool walks on the road, he lacks sense. And he says to everyone that he is a fool.

24:56

If the anger of a ruler rises against you, do not leave your place, for calmness will lay great offenses to rest. There's an evil that I have seen under the sun, as it were an error proceeding from the ruler.

25:08

Folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place. I've seen slaves on horses and princes walking on the ground like slaves. He who digs a pit will fall into it, and the serpent will bite him who breaks through a wall.

25:22

He who quarries stones is hurt by them, and he who splits logs is endangered by them. If the iron is blunt and one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength. But wisdom helps one to succeed.

25:35

The serpent bites before it is charmed. There is no advantage to the charmer. These are the words of the Lord. Would you guys pray with me? God, we thank you for your word. God, we thank you that we can gather here together this morning.

25:47

God, that we can humble ourselves before your word as God, we are fallible people who don't have all the answers. God, we fall short. We have so many gaps and so many missing spots in our own understanding and our own wisdom.

25:59

And God, we thank you that we can humble ourselves before you and before your word, God, that you would speak to us this morning. So God, as we gather, as we pray, as we have this time to humble ourselves before you, God, we pray that you would do just that.

26:12

God, that you would speak and that we would listen. God, that you would be glorified and that we would be humbled and put in our proper place this morning as we consider your greatness and we consider just how small and limited we are.

26:25

So God, we pray all this in Jesus' beautiful name and for his name that we pray these things, amen. All right, well, as we jump into our passage, we see a couple of different sections. The first thing that we see in the first four verses is just kind of simply outlining the basics of what we're gonna be talking about.

26:41

We recognize the options that are laid out here in front of us, and these are not unfamiliar options, but he's talking about wisdom and folly, right? This passage seems to kind of focus on a theme that we've seen several times throughout the Book of Ecclesiastes so far, wisdom and foolishness.

26:57

So this opening verse that we look at, this opening analogy talks about the value of wisdom, but how foolishness can really quickly ruin something that was previously good, right? Someone can work diligently for all their lives, trying to make right choice after right choice after right choice, but in a moment of weakness, in a moment of losing your mind or lashing out or slipping up or whatever it is, you can undo all the good that you've accomplished in just a short little window of time with one or two bad decisions.

27:28

Like Derek Kidner, the commentator was talking about these verses. He said, it's easier to make a stink than to create sweetness. Kind of sounds about right, right? You can live your whole life doing it right all the time, but if you lose your mind one time, you know what people are gonna probably remember? They're gonna think of the time that you lost it, right?

27:49

Ecclesiastes talks a great deal about wisdom and about foolishness, but chapter 10 is kind of putting this comparison front and center for us. So as I was studying this week, Philip Reichen, one of the commentators that I like reading, he's got a great commentary on the book of Ecclesiastes, he spent time on this section he termed defining folly.

28:10

I thought it'd be a valuable addition for us today, so we're gonna take just a minute or two and define folly this morning. So most Christians can kind of differentiate between the ideas of good and evil, right?

28:23

Even if you're not a Christian, a lot of people would agree with this idea that good and evil exist in the world. It seems like it's the basic premise of every kid's cartoon, or fairy tale, or there's the good guys and the bad guys, right?

28:36

Everybody's kind of familiar with that idea, has their own conception of what right and wrong is, but generally most people, if not all people in the world, try to, they do what they believe is right, and other people, they make sure that they hold to whatever that moral compass is, I'm going to do right and try not to do wrong, right?

29:00

There's a similar, a related, but this different concept that we're kind of talking about today, this concept of wisdom and folly, wisdom and foolishness. So in order for us to understand the difference between those two things, between right and wrong, and between wisdom and folly, it's important for us to know a biblical definition of what folly is.

29:21

So I think if we took a few minutes and grabbed a microphone and walked around the room and "what do you think folly is? Describe folly for everybody." You describe folly for everybody. I think most of us would walk around and we would talk about the fact that a person does dumb stuff, right?

29:35

If you're gonna be a fool, well, that probably means that you're a dumb person, that maybe there's a lack of intelligence there. But Philip Reichen talking about all of this, he said that folly does not always show up on the low end of the IQ scale.

29:50

Rather, the term refers to someone who lacks the proper fear of God and therefore is prone to go the wrong direction in life. Psalm chapter 14 is actually talking about this. It says in Psalm 14 that the fool says in his heart, there is no God.

30:05

To summarize this simply, I think it's accurate and clear to say that the fool says, I know what I'm doing. I don't need God's input. I don't need anybody else's opinion. I'm smart enough on my own. I'll just figure it out.

30:18

And they don't take advice from other people, specifically from God. And meanwhile, the wise would say that, well, God created the world. God built all of this to work in a proper way. And so I'm gonna do things his way.

30:30

His way is probably better than my way, right? And so we see this contrast between the wise who would trust what God has to say and follow his way in life versus the fool who says, I got the answers, I'll figure it out for myself.

30:45

We continue on in verse two. And in verse two, it says that a wise man's heart inclines him to the right, but a fool's heart to the left. Now this isn't a political commentary about the right and the left.

30:56

It's not a comment shaming all of the left-handed people in the room. God loves lefties too, right? But what we see here is, you know, it says that a wise man's heart inclines him to the right, but a fool's heart to the left.

31:09

Well, the right hand kind of has some symbolism throughout history, throughout culture, right? The right hand is generally referred to in scripture as the good side, right? It's associated with authority.

31:22

Anybody remember when Jesus returns to heaven? It talks about it in a few different places. Where is Jesus seated when he returns to heaven? Well, he's seated at the right hand of the Father, right? He's seated in the position of honor and authority at the right hand of the Father.

31:36

The right hand is also used to convey blessing. If you'll remember back in the book of Genesis, Israel would actually cross his hands to convey blessing to the younger son that was seated on his left hand side as he would bless Ephraim in Genesis 48.

31:51

We even today are familiar with this idea. Anybody ever referred to someone being their right hand man before? Well, the right hand is a position of honor, is a position of authority, is a position of a blessing.

32:04

So what the preacher is saying here when he says that the the fool is inclined to go left, and he's telling us that the fool is going the wrong direction in life. If the right side is the correct side, is the right side, right? Well then going left means that he's going away from where he should be going and so we see this simple statement in verse two but then in verse three and four we have kind of this interesting picture that pops up here.

32:28

In verse three it says, even when a fool walks on the road he lacks sense and he says to everyone that he is a fool. If the anger of a ruler rises against you do not leave your place for calmness will lay great offenses to rest.

32:41

We see these two verses kind of stand in comparison to one another. In verse three it seems to be an illustration of a foolish person and so this verse probably not taken literally as much as it seems funny to think about.

32:55

There's probably not a person actually walking down the street saying, "I'm a fool, I'm an idiot, hi I don't know what I'm doing." You know we're not actually seeing someone literally walking down the street, but you know anybody that's ever been around someone who just makes bad decisions it seems like we can really quickly kind of look at them and perceive all this person's not making great decisions, right?

33:16

It's very clear to everybody else around them that they're a foolish person that that keeps finding themselves in the same mistake over and over and over again. You know the old statement fool me once shame on you fool me twice shame on me fool me twice like 600 times you might be an idiot.

33:33

You know that the the reality is that if somebody continues to make a foolish decision after foolish decision after foolish decision it becomes clear to not only to everybody around them but probably eventually to that person as well.

33:46

So we see this foolish person illustrated in verse 3 but then there's this illustration of a wise person in verse 4 who chooses not to respond in anger but chooses calmness which will lay great offenses to rest.

34:00

The preacher here in verse 4 is actually praising the calm and quiet response as a response that turns away wrath as an example of wisdom kind of personified here in verse 4 if the anger of a ruler rises against you don't leave your place don't get all upset, for calmness will lay great offenses to rest.

34:19

This is the biblical way that the Bible tells us to deal with foolish people. It tells us not to respond in anger, not to escalate, not to openly attack them, but to reflect the peaceful character of Christ as we see Jesus reflect over and over and over again throughout the Gospels.

34:36

So we begin this whole passage with this continued theme that we've seen throughout Ecclesiastes of wisdom and how valuable wisdom can be and also foolishness by comparison, foolishness or folly. Whether we choose to walk in God's wisdom or by a person's own wisdom is kind of the question for us today.

34:57

So we look at this, we see the recognition of where we're at in the whole picture, but now we look at verses 5 through 9 and we see this challenge to recognize the randomness. Verses 5 through 9 encourages to recognize the randomness of life.

35:13

Those verses, starting in verse five again, it says, there is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as it were, an error proceeding from the ruler. For folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place.

35:26

I've seen slaves on horses and princes walking on the ground like slaves. He who digs a pit will fall into it, and a serpent will bite him who breaks through a wall. He who quarries stones is hurt by them, and he who splits logs is endangered by them.

35:40

Despite the fact that there are clearly advantages to living life God's way, living life according to the wisdom that God gives to us, the reality is that the preacher has kinda complained about several times throughout the Book of Ecclesiastes, there's this randomness that kinda seems to pop up in life, right?

35:56

You know, there's people that seem to do things the right way, that do everything right, and then things go sideways on them at the end. You know, we can't control the outcome of things in life, no matter how hard we try, no matter how much we think we can control things, there's this randomness that just shows up time and time again in life.

36:16

So we've got these two kinda pictures of that in this little section here. In verse five through seven, we see the preacher being brutally honest about what he sees, and he offers this example of what he's talking about all the way back in verse one.

36:31

You know, the people in charge make bad decisions, make bad policies, and you know, the stink of a single dead fly ruins the whole big pot of ointment. Foolish people can find themselves in positions of power and have great influence over the lives of others, and it can kinda mess things up for everybody else, right?

36:49

In the words of Martin Luther, just as a dead fly ruins the best of ointments, so it happens to the best of counsel in the state or in the Senate or in war. Along comes some wicked rascal and ruins everything.

37:03

Yeah, unfortunately, there have been many foolish people that have found their way to positions of power throughout human history, right? You don't have to read far through a

history book to see well that person was pretty wicked and evil and kind of a terrible person and they were in charge of a country and they were in charge of an empire.

37:21

Most actually, it seems like most, of the great emperors throughout human history were probably pretty wicked evil people, right? That even exists in our country if we want to be honest and right I'm not gonna start calling names but you know as foolish as they are they navigate their way to positions of power leadership through negotiation, through lying, through manipulation, or through other tactics.

37:44

They weasel their way into positions of power but it doesn't take an expert in political science or in history to see that folly is set in many high places, right? Folly being this description that we just talked about a minute ago.

37:59

Someone who thinks they have all the answers and so my way is better than God's way. We haven't ever seen that reflected in the leadership of our country or in the leadership of our state or even on a local level, right?

38:13

All right, moving on. I'm not trying to say anything. All of us probably have that happen time and time again throughout life, but it seems like it just shows up. We see him talking about these people in positions of power find themselves in foolish decisions that they make.

38:33

The people who should be leading a lot of the time, well, they aren't. People who should be in jail, often aren't. People who should be honored, often aren't. People who should be humbled and ashamed of their actions, well, they often aren't, right?

38:49

They proudly gloat about what they've done or what they've gotten away with. So we see the reality that people that don't belong to be in those positions make their way into positions of power and how that can ruin things for everybody.

39:02

But then he continues on in verse 8 and 9 talking about the randomness of life and how it doesn't seem like things make sense and these random options pop up in verse 8 and 9. He who digs a pit will fall into it. A serpent will bite him who breaks through a wall. He who quarries stones is hurt by them and he who splits logs is endangered by them. This section seems to kind of lament how the world is just a random place, right?

39:27

These people were just doing their job, but crazy things happen all the time. Bad things happen to what many of us would describe as good people and good things happen to what many of us would describe as bad people.

39:41

Tremper Longman was talking about these verses in his commentary and he said, here an innocent person is simply engaged in his occupation and he's accidentally injured. This is the first of four illustrations of people who are simply doing their jobs and who fall prey to the dangers that are inherent in their occupations.

39:59

Their injuries are simply accidental. They're not punishments for bad behavior. They're not mentioned so that the wise person can avoid them. They're simply unavoidable accidents. You know the reality is that we live in a world where things just don't always work out the way that we want them to.

40:15

Sometimes a guy that's digging the ditch falls into the hole, right? Sometimes a lumberjack that's out in the woods cutting down a tree, sometimes something bad happens and the tree gets fallen, you know, falls on him, right?

40:27

They don't always get injured, but sometimes they do. And, you know, to make this personal, my great -grandfather was actually killed on his property about a hundred years ago now, I think it was. He was killed as he was cutting down a tree and it fell on top of him.

40:41

So, you know, bad things don't always happen, but sometimes they do. Sometimes these random things happen and take place and, you know, while these unforeseen things happen where a person suffers hurt, there can just seem to be this sense of randomness to it a lot of the time.

40:56

You know, why is it that that person that cut rocks and worked in construction was fine for all the years of his life. Meanwhile, this person had something terrible happen to them. It doesn't make sense.

41:07

There's this randomness that shows up all throughout life, but in verses 10 and 11 we see a challenge to overcome the randomness in these last couple of verses that we're going to look at. Verses 10 and 11, they tell us that if the iron is blunt and one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength, but wisdom helps one to succeed.

41:25

And if the serpent bites before it is charmed, well there's no advantage to the charmer. The randomness of life's events does not mean that there's no benefit in doing things the right way and doing things God's way.

41:37

Yes, there's always going to be exceptions to the rules. Yes, we acknowledge the fact that God is ultimately in control and we're not, right? We've talked about that several times throughout the book of Ecclesiastes.

41:49

God's in control and we're not. So as much as we like to think that we can control every little detail of our lives by, you know, eating the right things and exercising and going to the right places and doing, you know, doing all the things that we're supposed to do, the reality is that sometimes we're just not in control.

42:05

Bad things happen that are totally opposite of what we think should happen based on the way that we've been dealing with all the little details. Yes, there are exceptions to the rules, but that doesn't mean that there's no benefit in wisdom.

42:20

That doesn't mean that there's no benefit in doing things the way that God tells us to. Verses 10 and 11 kind of give us a really beautiful, simple picture of that, right? In verse 10 it talks about someone who's out trying to cut down a tree.

42:32

Now if I gave you a big rock, would it be possible for you to eventually work and work and work and knock a tree over? Yeah, I mean, take the rock and you just start beating on it. Eventually you're gonna, you know, you're probably gonna take little tiny chunks and it may take you days or months or however long it takes you, but eventually you can cut down a tree with a rock or with a dull axe or something that's limited in its effectiveness, right?

42:55

Now if you were to take that same rock and sharpen it down and turn it into a nice sharp axe, well, you know what? You're probably going to be a little more effective at cutting

that tree down, right? Obviously, it's going to go a little bit easier for you. If it's easier to cut down a tree with a rock or with a sharp axe, which one's probably going to be the better choice? The axe, right? Obviously, the axe is going to be the better option.

43:19

So simple wisdom says that a person would benefit from sharpening his tools, from sharpening his axe before he goes out and tries to cut down a tree. So what is this verse trying to say? Well, clearly there's no guarantee that everything's going to work out the way that we want it to.

43:34

There's no guarantee that we'll be able to control all the outcomes in life, but for us to just go, eh, it's all random, so I'm just going to go do whatever I want and just see what happens. Well, okay, there's still some benefit here in preparing and making the wise choice and sharpening the axe, and there's value in doing things the right way, right?

43:53

He's encouraging us in verse 10 to slow down and prepare, that if we do things the right way, generally, we'll have a better chance of them turning out the right way as God's way. Verse 11 though, kind of gives us the opposite point of verse 10.

44:07

Verse 11 it says that if a serpent bites before it's charmed well there's no advantage to the charmer. So verse 10 is telling us slow down, prepare, do things the right way and things will work out well for you.

44:18

You know what verse 11 is kind of telling you? If you sit around and wait too long you can be paralyzed by analysis and things don't go well for you then either. You can sit there and and try to freeze and figure out the best decision and it literally can come back to bite you in this analogy, right?

44:36

If the snake is not charmed it's gonna bite you before it has any benefit to you. So we take these two verses together. I think they show us just again very clearly our need for the wisdom that comes from God.

44:49

Sometimes it's important for us to slow down and take time and prepare and do things the meticulous way and sometimes there's a time when you just simply need to make a decision that today's decision and good plan is better than tomorrow's perfect plan, right?

45:04

We see that wisdom comes in knowing the difference between these two things. Talking about this idea of wisdom and foolishness, this isn't just something that we see in Ecclesiastes. We also see Jesus talk about it in the New Testament, right?

45:18

In Matthew 5, 6, and 7 we see this beautiful passage of Scripture where Jesus is giving, what we refer to as, the Sermon on the Mount and is giving this great explanation of what things are like in the kingdom of God and how people can live God's way and all these incredible things that he's teaching.

45:36

But in Matthew 7 we see that Jesus clearly believed that there was a difference between wisdom and foolishness. That the path of wisdom was the right direction and the path of foolishness was the wrong direction.

45:49

He even, as he's telling this story that we're gonna look at in Matthew 7, he believed that wisdom was the difference between life and death. Matthew chapter 7 verses 24 through 28, Jesus is speaking to the crowds and he says, everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who has built his house on the rock.

46:10

The rain fell and the floods came and the wind blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who's built his house on the sand.

46:22

The rain fell, the floods came, the wind blew and beat against that house and it fell and great was the fall of it. And Jesus finished these teachings and the crowd was astonished at his teaching. You know, it says here as Jesus is making this comparison, it says that the wise man who built his house upon the rock was benefited by his wisdom, right?

46:44

So what did the rock represent? Not our church, the rock and the story. According to Jesus, the wise person is the one who built his house upon the rock. Well, it says that he was the one who hears these words of mind, Jesus, and who does them.

47:01

Meanwhile, the fool in the story, the one who builds his house on the sand, who makes the poor decision and things don't work out well for him, well, he's the one who refused to receive the counsel of Jesus.

47:11

He refused to do what it is that God said for him to do, what Jesus had said. So if we're wise, well, there's a benefit there. If we're wise, we will build our lives on Jesus, we will build our lives upon his word and we'll be obedient to what he tells us to do.

47:27

What he tells us to do in his word, we'll be obedient to it. The same word that in 2 Timothy chapter 3 is referred to as making us wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. This comparison of wisdom and folly is just super simple for us as we look at these verses, but the reality is that we live in a world where information is more popular and is more preferred versus wisdom in a lot of situations.

47:56

We live in a world where we're bombarded with facts. If you're sitting at a meal with somebody and you start to disagree about "what's the best way to do this," you don't have to sit there and argue about it, you don't even have to think about it.

48:06

You can just pull your phone out and go, hey Siri, what's the best way to build a dam in this river in my backyard that's come through with all the floodwaters? We don't have to think through things, we don't have to analyze things, we just have all these facts that are available to us.

48:23

While a lot of those facts, all the information that's available to us can be a great resource to us, it seems like there's less grasped knowledge, understood knowledge wrestled with wisdom that's available to people today than there was in years past when there was way less information, facts that were actually made available to us.

48:43

We have all these answers just stuffed in our pockets in our cell phones, but we also live in an age where you can say something that's true, the scientific principle, gravity exists. If I take this and hold it out and let go, it's gonna fall to the ground.

48:59

That's a fact. That's something that we know to be true. But people today seem to argue that everything is relative. Well, that's your truth, and you may think that, and you may want to believe that, but that's not true for me.

49:15

Okay, maybe? Probably not though, right? Like there's things that are just objectively true. If you don't believe in gravity, gravity doesn't apply to you. We're gonna find that out when we climb up on the roof and say, all right, prove it.

49:28

But it's not gonna work out well. They may say all they want to that they don't believe in that, that that doesn't apply to them, but when we're standing on the edge of the roof, they're probably gonna think twice about that decision, right?

49:41

The reality is that we live in a world where there's so much information available to us, so many facts available to us on the internet, but that doesn't necessarily mean that we have wisdom just because we have all these facts available to us.

49:54

Truth is believed today to be a matter of opinion that changes with life circumstances, that changes by who it is that says it. Well, that's true for you, but that's not my truth. People are swimming in this ocean of facts, but each individual must find their own truth in the midst of all the information out there.

50:12

We live in a world where there's all this information at our fingertips, but to live wisely requires so much more than just information, requires so much more than just facts. Godly wisdom begins by learning what's true, right?

50:26

We can look around at the world and we can observe things and we can learn factual things that are true from God's world. And we can also learn things that are factually true from what God has revealed to us in his word.

50:38

We know that this book, everything that's in here, that it is inspired by God, that it is breathed out by God. We believe that this is absolutely perfect, that there are no mistakes, that there are no typos, there are no errors in God's word.

50:51

And so if we look at that and we believe that to be true and that is true, well, then there's that foundation for us to start taking steps towards grasping Godly wisdom. It's the reason why this conversation is the reason why our mission statement as a church is so multifaceted, right?

51:10

There's a lot of churches that you can go to and what is it that they try to accomplish? You can go into a lot of churches on a Sunday morning like today and go in and, you know, why do you guys exist? Why are you here? Oh, well, we're here so that we can teach you about God. Seems like a good thing to do, right? Teach you lots of things, you know, we're gonna preach the Bible, we're gonna teach you some wonderful songs, you're gonna learn a lot of good things about God today.

51:36

Well, those are good things, right? I don't think any of us would argue that we don't wanna learn things about God. You know, it's tempting for a lot of people to just come to church and just learn a lot of facts, learn a lot of facts about God, just like we would if we were sitting at home watching Jeopardy.

51:51

We could learn lots of interesting facts about lots of things, but there's a need for a lot more than just facts in our relationship with God. It's the reason why our mission statement has all these different things that we wanna focus on and make sure that we're doing.

52:06

We have to learn what it means to follow Jesus, to be obedient to all the things that he's called us to do. To know a lot of things about God is not the end goal of why we exist as a church, why we exist as Christians, right?

52:20

For us to just know a lot of things, lots of people can know lots of things. That doesn't mean that I have any sort of practical benefit from all those things. We have to be prepared to live it out. Has to make a difference in our lives.

52:32

And so it's the reason why our sanctuary was littered this morning with all these little pieces of paper that look like this. So good news, bad news. You guys didn't come last night. And if you didn't come last night, you didn't get like the world premiere, that happened last night, but you guys are still on the opening weekend.

52:52

So this is a brand new document that our church elders and staff have been working on and have written. And so, you know, you guys have heard us talk about our mission statement, why we exist as a church for a year or so now that we've been talking about this.

53:07

But yeah, there have been some questions, there's been some confusion about a few different things. And I think just absolute crystal clarity is important for us. If we're all gonna be moving in the same direction, well, we have to know what that is, right?

53:19

And so we wrote this little document, I think it's fairly succinct and to the point. So I'm gonna read and not talk about it as much as I'd like to in all the different places. But I wanna read this together and just together collectively read and consider why is it that we exist as a church?

53:36

What is it that we're trying to do in a very practical way? What are we trying to accomplish as a church? So hopefully you've got one on a chair near you or that you're sitting on or look around nearby, grab a copy, but we're gonna read together, we're gonna read our mission statement and then this simple description of what it is that we're trying to accomplish as a church.

53:57

Oh, one other thing before we start reading, you see these little icons that we had designed? I'm really excited about those because I'm a visual learner. So, you know, for me, I can hear things a million times, but for me to see it is far more beneficial.

54:10

And we had a graphic artist design those little icons as visual ways for us to remember, for us to trigger these thoughts in our mind of, oh, yeah, I am supposed to help people know Jesus. And so there's a knowledge in that person's heart or to follow Jesus with these feet or whatever it is.

54:30

So enjoy those little pictures. You're gonna see those show up a lot more around the building and around stuff that we're doing in the future. But let's read together. Our mission statement and our description of what that is.

54:40

So first, our mission statement. The Rock Community Church exists to make disciples who know Jesus, follow Jesus, serve Jesus, and obey Jesus. So without direction, people and organizations are left aimlessly wander, hoping to accomplish something meaningful through their efforts.

54:57

Thankfully, Jesus did not ever intend for his followers to be left to wonder about their direction. Before his ascension into heaven, Jesus gave a clear and lasting commission to the church to accomplish in his absence.

55:09

In Matthew 28 verses 19 and 20, Jesus told his disciples to go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

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And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. As a church, following in the tradition of these words, The Rock Community Church exists to make disciples in obedience to the command of Jesus.

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In order to make our objectives clear and measurable, we've identified four specific ways we believe people come to be mature disciples of Jesus, which we've identified as know, follow, serve, and obey.

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Each of these aspects will be described in more detail below. The first step to becoming a disciple of Jesus is the necessary step of coming to know Jesus in a personal way. This idea of knowing Jesus is not simply knowing a bunch of trivia facts about Jesus or having an intellectual understanding of who he is.

56:06

This foundational step of knowing Jesus speaks to the importance of having a personal relational knowledge of Jesus. If we're going to be a church who makes disciples, we must first see people come to repentance of sin and faith in Jesus.

56:19

This means that we must be a church full of evangelistic people who are sharing the good news of salvation with the world around them. To be successful in this area, we must be intentional and we must be direct.

56:30

There are many good things that churches do to involve people in the activities of the church, but more importantly than being associated with the church, each individual must have a personal relationship with Jesus.

56:40

Have you repented of your sin and come to accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, as he paid the penalty for your sin on the cross as your substitute. John chapter 17 says that this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you've sent.

56:56

Philippians chapter 3 says, Paul said, I count everything as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through the faith in Christ, a righteousness from God that depends on faith,

57:18

that I may know him and the power of his resurrection. Next is follow. The next step in our mission statement is to follow Jesus. Once a person comes to faith in Jesus through repentance and knows Jesus, the next step is for that new disciple to learn to follow Jesus as a believer.

57:35

Following Jesus requires a few things in order to be successfully accomplished, but these are very important steps as a disciple begins to grow in their relationship with Jesus. Jesus means that a disciple must begin to learn the spiritual disciplines and see those begin to take root in their life.

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That means to read and study the Bible, to pray and deepen their relationship with God, to learn how to worship God and give him value in their life, and to engage with the family, with the church as their support system.

58:04

If the first step of knowing Jesus brings a person to spiritual life, then the step of following Jesus is the process of a new spiritual infant growing up in their faith. To put following Jesus into simple terms, this step refers to many familiar church programs like studies and community groups.

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Being involved in a study helps an individual know what Jesus has asked us to do and helps them to follow his commands in their life. To attend a community group helps a disciple live out those commands and to follow Jesus in very tangible aspects of life.

58:36

To grow up in our faith and mature in our relationship with Jesus, we must learn what Jesus has called us to and begin to make a habit of doing what he asks us to do in our personal life. First John chapter two, I love this passage.

58:49

It says, by this we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments. Whoever says I know him but does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected.

59:04

By this we may know that we are in him. Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. Luke chapter nine says Jesus said to all of them, if

anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow after me.

59:21

And then in John 10, Jesus also said, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. Let's follow, the next thing in our mission statement is for people to serve Jesus. Once a disciple has come to know Jesus and is learning what it means to follow him, the next step is for them to begin to serve Jesus in tangible ways.

59:41

One of the marks of a maturing disciple is the reality that they begin to focus their attention on other people and give of themselves for the benefit of others. Scripture is explicitly clear that the church was designed by God to support and to care for the needs of one another.

59:56

That we will not be able to successfully function on our own. Christians are given spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit at the time of their conversion. And we are commanded to use those gifts to serve others in our local church, in our community and around the world.

01:00:10

It is impossible, impossible for a disciple to be fully devoted and obedient to Christ if they have been gifted by the Holy Spirit to build up the church, but they refuse to use their gifts to serve those around them in some way.

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The goal and expectation of The Rock is that people grow in maturity as disciples of Jesus. That they will successfully find their role of serving that God has gifted and called them to. This will look very different for each individual but all are expected to be serving the Lord and the church as they strive for maturity in their faith.

01:00:43

Verse Peter chapter 4 says that as each has received a gift use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace. Romans chapter 12 says that for as in one body we have many members the members do not all have the same function so we though many are one body in Christ, individual members of one another.

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Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us let us use them. Finally the last thing in our mission statement is calling people to obey Jesus. The final part of our RockCC mission is to see people come to obey Jesus.

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Now there's while there's some degree of obedience to Jesus required in every step of this mission the specific focus of this step is to see mature disciples of Jesus obey his command to go make more disciples.

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Now there's a scientific principle that we see throughout nature that applies to our mission statement. mature things reproduce. Whether one is considering plants or animals or humans, the reality is that as organisms mature and become fully developed, there are processes that God placed in the natural order to allow an organism to reproduce.

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The spiritual growth cycle of a disciple is no different. As someone comes to know Jesus and learns to follow and serve him, they're growing towards maturity. The result of that maturing process is that as we reach spiritual maturity, we are each tasked with playing a role in Jesus's command to go and make disciples.

01:02:09

As you have been taught, you should now be willing to share what you have learned with others. Mature disciples are expected to be sharing the gospel regularly, helping others

to know Jesus. Mature disciples are expected to assist others as they learn to follow Jesus, walking alongside brothers and sisters and helping them to mature.

01:02:28

Mature disciples are also expected to champion the cause of the church, the bride of Christ, and encourage others to serve Jesus by using their spiritual gifts to build and support his church. And the goal of the Obey step is to see mature disciples at RockCC committed to making more disciples.

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Matthew 28, this is a familiar one we read it at the very beginning. It says, go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you.

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2 Timothy 2, I love this verse too. It says, now Paul charging Timothy, his younger son in the faith. And he says, what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

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That's why we exist as a church. That's why we're here, right? There's a reason for all of the things that we do. There's a reason why we have Bible studies. It's not just so we can learn more things about Jesus.

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It's so we can learn what he tells us to do so we can do them, right? It's not just that we need people to help us make breakfast so we can all eat, and that's this great organization. No, God has given us spiritual gifts to be able to teach, to be able to lead and worship, to be able to serve others, to be able to encourage one another.

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All these different things, God has given us these gifts and has commanded us to go and to do these things. This goal is not just, we're not just trying as a church to build an exciting crowd of people that you can all come sit and hear a funny message and hear something that makes you feel good this morning and then leave and it makes no difference in your life.

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The reason why we exist as a church is because Jesus, all of these things, they're not just cool things that we came up with as a church. This isn't new, you guys didn't hear anything that's not been talked about for thousands of years up to this point.

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Jesus is calling people into a personal relationship with Him. It's not enough for us to just know fact, about Jesus. I hope that you know him personally. I hope that if you know him personally that you're growing up and learning what it means to actually live out your faith and to do that in a really practical, tangible way.

01:04:41

It's not just something that we bury away in the back of our minds. It makes a difference when we go to school. It makes a difference when we go to work. It makes a difference when we're on the ball field, right?

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You know, as difficult as that is sometimes if you guys have ever been involved in youth sports. But it makes a difference in all those places, right? Changes things in us. If we live life, you know, this passage that we've been studying this morning was talking about wisdom, living life God's way, and foolishness, living life our own way.

01:05:13

The description that we used at the very beginning of all of this to describe a wise person and a foolish person. A wise person realizes that God created the world, God knows how things work best, and I'm gonna do things his way instead of thinking that I've got all the answers.

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Meanwhile, a fool over here says, God, I've got it. I'll let you know when I need you, and, I probably know better here, so I'm gonna do relationships my way. I'm gonna do work productivity my way.

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I'm gonna do all these things. I'm gonna coach basketball or coach football or coach soccer or what... I'm gonna do it my way because, God, you don't get to have input on my life over here. That's a foolish person.

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For us to stand here and to acknowledge, well, God's way is best. God created it. God knows how it works. God should have an idea of how we should live all this out. Well, for us to say, yeah, yeah, yeah, God's way is better, but I'm gonna do what I want.

01:06:06

Well, that's just simply foolish, right? It's a dumb statement for us to make. If we're gonna listen to what God has to say and then do what we want instead. As a church, we want to make sure that we have no confusion about that, that there's no mistakes about, oh, maybe we'll just go do this thing because it sounds fun to me.

01:06:25

No, Jesus has given us tasks to do. Jesus has given us commission of what we're supposed to do. It's not up to interpretation for us on how we do that. We do what Jesus tells us to do. It's because, you know, our mission statement, there's one word that shows up like 44 times in a 20 -word statement, right?

01:06:45

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. There's a common theme throughout all this, right? It's not about me. It's not about you. It's not about us. It's about Jesus. Let that sink in a little bit, right?

01:07:02

It's about Jesus. And if Jesus told us, go make disciples, and then Jesus said, you know what, here's some steps of how we do. He didn't give us the know and follow and serve and obey and a cleanly put together mission statement for us, but I think he kind of did.

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All of those things that we just looked at, all of those things that we just talked about, are clearly in Scripture and are a command, not a suggestion, a command, on our lives as we become mature disciples and followers of Jesus.

01:07:30

So as we finish today, as we've talked about wisdom and foolishness, as we've talked about living life your way or living life God's way, I hope that you'll take that little piece of paper home with you, that it'll sit on your passenger seat in your car, that it'll sit on your couch wherever it is and stare at you and stare at you and stare at you, that when you pick it up and glance at it, I want you to read through it and to kind of prayerfully ask yourself the question,

01:07:55

where am I at in this whole conversation? Because every single person in this room shows up somewhere in that document. Where are you at and what's the next thing for you to be doing as a part of this church, as a part of this mission, not our mission as a church, but God's mission in the world, right?

01:08:14

Where are you at in that? Do you have a relationship with Jesus? Because if you don't, that's the first step. We want you to come to know Jesus in a personal way. That's the foundation. That's the starting point for all of it.

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If you already know Jesus, well, start to ask the question, well, am I growing up in my faith? Am I maturing? Am I learning and studying what God has told me to do? Am I learning to live that out practically and following Jesus really tangibly in my life?

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If you're not, well, then that's your next step. Maybe you're doing that really well, but you're still kind of focused on, well, "I think" and "I want" and "I'd prefer." It's very me, me, me. Well, maybe if you're in that point, well, maybe it's time for you to start to take a step out, to serve Jesus, to start to take your focus from me, me, me to how can I serve someone else?

01:09:03

How can I give of my time, give of my resources, give of my energy and all the things that God's given to me, how can I take what God's given me and how can I use that to be a blessing to somebody else?

01:09:13

Because Jesus told us all of us as believers have a responsibility to take what he's given to us and use it to be a blessing to somebody else, whether it's in our church, whether it's in our community, whether it's in the world at large, as we're starting to have conversations about missions, trips, and things like that in the future being more involved internationally as a church.

01:09:34

Where is that you're going to get involved and get plugged in? Start to ask that question for yourself, and maybe you're doing all those things. Well, you know what? You sound like a mature disciple that probably needs to give what you've got, what God has given to you. It's time for you to go to be a blessing to somebody else. There's this really cool thought that people have shared with me that, you know, have you ever thought about how the message of Jesus got from Jesus thousands of years ago to where we're sitting here talking about it today?

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We're thousands of years separated from when Jesus walked the earth. You know how that message got from there to here? Well, Jesus gave it to the disciples and they started to tell people. And they started to talk about it to other people, and they started to give what Jesus had given to them, they started to give it to other people.

01:10:22

They started to share the good news of salvation. They started to share what it looks like to be obedient and to follow Jesus. They took it and they passed it on to another spiritual generation, that they invested what God had given them into another person.

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And then that person took it and invested it in another person. And that person took it and invested in another person and another person and another person until it got to your Sunday school teacher that you sat in and heard the gospel from as a child.

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Till it made it to your evangelist that you heard explain the gospel years ago. Maybe you were at a harvest festival, maybe you were at some evangelistic conference, maybe you were sitting at home and it made its way to your mom and dad that they eventually shared that with you one day.

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It has worked its way down to the point where you've had the opportunity to hear that good news of salvation, where you have had that opportunity to take what was given through the generations and it was invested in you.

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So I think the next question for us is, does it stop with you? Or do we have a responsibility to continue to give that to the next spiritual generation and the next spiritual generation and the next spiritual generation?

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I don't wanna be the person that, Christianity died out because Drew was selfish and sat on this little awesome piece of information that's made its way all the way through history and got stuck here because I didn't feel like sharing with somebody.

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God's given us this incredible opportunity but this incredible responsibility to take what he's given to us and to entrust it to others who can go and do likewise like 2 Timothy chapter two was talking about.

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So as you take that piece of paper home, as you look at that piece of paper, as you consider and ask the question, where am I at in this? I promise you, there is something that God wants for you to take away from that.

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There's something that God is sitting here going, you need to grow up. You need to give it to somebody else. Slow down. And as we have opportunity, as you take these things home with you, that's gonna start showing up on our website and around our building.

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You're not gonna be able to ignore this, right? It's gonna show up. The only option you've got is to not come here anymore. Because this is who we are as a church and this is what we're gonna be doing.

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And this is what we want to accomplish. And that means that you, I wish I could stop and make eye contact with every single one of you, like you. You have a responsibility in this mission of Jesus that he's given to us as a church.

01:13:00

I hope that you'll ask where is that and you'll take that next step. I promise you there's a next step. Would you guys pray with me? God, we thank you for your word. We thank you for this opportunity to consider from Ecclesiastes the difference in wisdom and doing life your way versus folly and foolishness, doing life our own way, thinking that we've got all the answers and that we don't need you in any way,

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shape, or form to influence us. That's just foolish. God, we need you every moment of every day. God, I need you in every decision. God, I need you in every moment, whether it's moments that I feel strong or whether it's moments that I feel weak.

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God, I'm always weak and I always need you. And God, I am always, just like the first verse in our passage, God, I am always one stupid decision away from being a dead fly in the ointment and ruining it all.

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God, I just pray that as we talk about all these things, God, as we talk about the difference between living life the way that you call us to and living life the way that we just feel like doing it on our own.

01:14:05

God, I pray that you would help us to, God, to be obedient. God, that you would help us to have a really big picture of who you are and a really small limited view of how important we are and our opinions are and all those things.

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God, we want to be people who live life the way that you've called us to. God, we wanna be people who live in obedience to the things that you've commanded us to do. God, we pray that in all these things, God, that you would be glorified, that you in our church would be glorified as we try to go and make more disciples, more followers, take what you've given to us and give it to someone else and help someone else to grow up in their faith,

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that mature things would exist in this church, mature disciples would exist in this church and that as mature disciples that we would reproduce ourselves in another spiritual generation. God, I pray that you would help us to, God, to be people who are fully committed to being obedient to what you've called us to do.

01:15:00

And God, I pray that you would give us the strength to do it because we are not capable of doing it on our own. God, we need you and I pray that you would help us to glorify you in everything that we say, everything that we do. We love you. It's in your son's name we pray, amen.