



In One Ear, Out The Other

Part 2 - "The Wise Thing"

Small Group Material

October 22nd, 2017

Leader Guide

Bottom Line: *In light of my past experience, present circumstances, and my future hopes and dreams, what is the wise thing to do?*

Study Verses: *Proverbs 19:20, Proverbs 12:15, Proverbs 15:31-33, Ephesians 5:15-17, Genesis 25:29-34, James 1:5*

Define The Win: *Participants would recognize the places where they are rationalizing their actions to justify their response to a situation. They would view the decisions they make through the lens of "what is the wise thing to do?" Group members would surround themselves with people who have the ability to provide godly wisdom, guidance and direction.*

Key Points

- *We've given advice to others that we don't even apply to ourselves.*
- *Not every decision is a moral decision.*
- *We're experts at rationalizing decisions that we know are wrong.*
- *Asking, "Is it wise?" takes your issue out of the arena of right and wrong by entering into the world of wisdom.*
- *There are seasons where something that once was wise is no longer the wise thing to do.*
- *Small decisions we make NOW can train wreck our future LATER.*

- *Your greatest regret could've been avoided had you asked "Is this wise?" and acted on your conclusion.*
- *We never have to rationalize a good decision.*
- *Every kind of addiction begins with self-deception.*

ENCOUNTER

- **What is the piece of advice you catch yourself giving to others that you struggle to take to heart and live out yourself?**
- **How do the small decisions we make now influence the person we become in the future?**
- **What's the difference in our mindset when we stop asking if something is right or wrong, but whether it is wise for us? How do you determine what to do when you are faced with a decision that is not black or white, but rather resides in the grey area?**
- **What alarms should go off in our heart and mind when we find ourselves rationalizing our choices?**

FORMATION

- **Read Proverbs 19:20, Proverbs 12:15 and Proverbs 15:31-33. What danger exists when we attempt to make important decisions in isolation and not surrounded by a supportive community?**
- **Read Ephesians 5:15-17. What challenges do we face if we want to live a wise life in today's culture? What does it look like to "make the most of every opportunity" in our pursuit of wisdom?**
- **Read Genesis 25:29-34. What led Esau to make an unwise decision? How did his immediate needs trump his future legacy?**

EXPRESSION

- **Read James 1:5. Where do you need to ask God for wisdom? From your perspective, what is the wise thing to do in response to the circumstances you face?**
- **When making a wise decision we need to consider our past experiences, present circumstances and future hopes and dreams. Of the three, which one do you tend to lose sight of when making decisions?**

- **Where do you find yourself rationalizing your behavior, attitude or actions? In what ways are you playing games to justify your response?**

LEADER INSIGHT: *We've all had numerous people around us who gave us advice that has gone "in one ear and out the other." To take this to another level, we've probably caught ourselves giving advice to someone else and as we hear it come out of our mouths we realize that we don't even heed what we're saying. Our greatest regrets could've been avoided if we asked "what is the wise thing to do?" and acted on our conclusions. If we would've sought wisdom, we could've spared ourselves years of chaos, brokenness and hurt.*

Sometimes the decisions we face aren't a matter of right or wrong. Rather than being a black and white, the choice we make resides in the grey area. Our hearts don't do too well with the grey. We wrongly assume that if it's not illegal, unethical, or immoral, then it qualifies as a legitimate choice. We reason as long as there isn't a law against it or there isn't a Bible verse prohibiting it, then we are in the clear. But, not every decision is a moral decision.

If we can deem that something is not morally wrong, then we often conclude that it's the right decision. There's nothing wrong with going to dinner with her or one date with him. There's nothing wrong with comparing ourselves to our friend's post on Instagram. There's nothing morally wrong with spending that much on a car lease. There's no law telling us it's wrong to eat unlimited amounts of ice cream or tuning into our favorite sitcom. Yet, this doesn't mean it is wise to polish off a gallon of cookie dough ice cream while lounging on the couch binge watching Netflix.

Sometimes the grey area has us facing choices that can have more devastating effects than an upset stomach and tired eyes. We're experts at rationalizing decisions that we know are wrong. No one is better at deceiving us than ourselves. We tell ourselves we can handle it, that it won't hurt anybody and that we can quit when we want to. We're well aware of the games we're playing. And even if we're not, the fact that we have to give a reason or excuse should tip us off.

We never have to rationalize good decisions like eating vegetables, why we ought to exercise, save money, or avoid bad company. Asking, "Is it wise?" takes our issue out of the arena of right and wrong by entering it into the world of wisdom. This question leaves less room for rationalization. We all know from experience how easy it is to stumble. This is why we have to be careful on the decisions we make. We not only need to ask God for wisdom, but we must be proactive in surrounding ourselves with individuals who walk with integrity and provide insight. We also have to take it a step further and grant both parties access to speak into our situation and expose our hearts.

By considering our past experiences, our present circumstances and our future hopes and dreams, we place boundaries up in our decision making process. We all have a picture of our futures and what we want them to be, and if we don't ask what is wise, small decisions can train wreck the futures we're imagining.