

# Sermon Note: Holding onto Wisdom

## Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

### Introduction

As we continue our “Uncommon Wisdom” series, this week we turn our attention to Proverbs 1, where Wisdom is personified as a woman crying out in the streets. She offers a bold, no-nonsense call to those who are lost, urging them to listen and follow her guidance. This passage challenges us to consider what it means to truly hold onto wisdom in our daily lives.

In this part of Proverbs, Wisdom doesn’t mince words about the consequences of ignoring her. She tells us plainly that a life without wisdom is a life fraught with peril. But more than that, she invites us to embrace a life shaped by discernment, integrity, and responsiveness to God’s call. As we prepare for Sunday’s worship, let’s reflect on how we can open ourselves to Wisdom’s voice, even when it’s hard to hear.

### Illustration Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSP3GIWbJ7Q>

A scene from the movie “A Beautiful Mind” (2001), where Alicia Nash, realizing the depth of John’s struggles, suggests that he use his heart rather than his head to discern what is real. This advice helps John start his journey toward distinguishing between reality and hallucination.

### Why This Video?

This scene captures the essence of listening to wisdom, especially when it requires a deeper level of understanding beyond mere intellect. Alicia’s encouragement for John to trust his heart reflects the call of Wisdom in Proverbs to embrace deeper truths that might challenge our conventional ways of thinking. It shows how wisdom often involves looking beyond the obvious and trusting in guidance that comes from a place of deeper insight and understanding.

### Video Discussion Questions

1. In the video, Alicia encourages John to trust his heart over his head to discern reality. How does this reflect the idea of listening to wisdom in challenging situations?
2. Think about a time in your life when you had to rely on a deeper sense of understanding to navigate a difficult decision. How did that experience help you grow or change?
3. How can Wisdom’s call in Proverbs 1 help us navigate the challenging situations we face today, especially when they require discernment and trust?

## Proverbs 1:20-33 (NRSVue)

<sup>20</sup>Wisdom cries out in the street;  
in the squares she raises her voice.  
<sup>21</sup>At the busiest corner she cries out;  
at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:  
<sup>22</sup>“How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?  
How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing  
and fools hate knowledge?  
<sup>23</sup>Give heed to my reproof;  
I will pour out my thoughts to you;  
I will make my words known to you.  
<sup>24</sup>Because I have called and you refused,  
have stretched out my hand and no one heeded,  
<sup>25</sup>and because you have ignored all my counsel  
and would have none of my reproof,  
<sup>26</sup>I also will laugh at your calamity;  
I will mock when panic strikes you,  
<sup>27</sup>when panic strikes you like a storm  
and your calamity comes like a whirlwind,  
when distress and anguish come upon you.  
<sup>28</sup>Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer;  
they will seek me diligently but will not find me.  
<sup>29</sup>Because they hated knowledge  
and did not choose the fear of the Lord,  
<sup>30</sup>would have none of my counsel  
and despised all my reproof,  
<sup>31</sup>therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way  
and be sated with their own devices.  
<sup>32</sup>For waywardness kills the simple,  
and the complacency of fools destroys them;  
<sup>33</sup>but those who listen to me will be secure  
and will live at ease without dread of disaster.”

## Scripture Discussion Questions

1. Wisdom is personified as a woman who raises a lament that, despite her cries, the simple ones ignore her, the scoffers ridicule, and the fools resist. How can we engage people to hold onto wisdom when they seem set against it?
2. Wisdom is clear about the consequences of ignoring her counsel. What does she say about the outcomes for the foolish, and is there any hope if people change their ways?
3. Life isn't always as simple as “the good benefit and the wicked suffer.” How do you hold onto wisdom, integrity, compassion, or justice when it doesn't seem to get you anywhere?

4. Read [James 3:1-12](#), where wisdom is linked to teachers who are held to a higher standard. What does this passage say about “the tongue” and the importance of wise speech in the face of gossip, lies, misinformation, and slander?
5. Many Wisdom sayings present issues as either/or; right/wrong; wise/foolish. In [Mark 8:34-38](#), Jesus describes two ways: denying oneself to gain the kingdom or giving up one’s life for the gospel to save it. How do you interpret this? What does it say about who is a legitimate follower and heir to the kingdom?

### **Additional (Optional) Questions**

1. Is there a difference between being “wise” and being “smart”?
2. Who is someone you consider wise?
3. What about them makes you consider them wise?
4. This scripture personifies Wisdom as if she were speaking. What are some things Wisdom says about herself?
5. Is there any wisdom you get upset about? Could it come from scripture, parents, teachers, or others?
6. How do you define wisdom?
7. What are the characteristics of someone who is foolish (not wise)?

### **Weekly Action**

This week, take time to reflect on an area of your life where you’ve struggled to embrace wisdom. Whether it’s a decision you’re facing, a relationship that needs mending, or a habit you want to change, write down what Wisdom might be saying to you in that situation. Consider sharing this with a trusted friend or mentor for their perspective and support.

### **Prayer**

God of Wisdom and God of Power, grant us grace in this hour. Bring us into the fullness of your hope; fill us with right desire; tame our wayward tongues; and embolden us for self-sacrifice; for we ask this in Jesus’ name and for his sake. Amen.