

**BIG IDEA**

Wise people follow  
God's guidance.

**BIBLE**

Ephesians 1:15–23; Proverbs 1:20–33;  
Luke 2:52

**ABOUT THIS WEEK**

You can have the best coach in the world, but does it really matter if you don't follow their advice? This week, we'll look at one of Paul's letters when he advised a church to listen to the Holy Spirit God gave to them. His message about trusting God's leadership and learning to rely on the Holy Spirit helps us see that **wise people follow God's guidance.**

*WHAT? What are we talking about today?*

**VIDEO | A Clip from Miracle On Ice**

- Welcome to week three of our series, Good Call. Not only have we been seeing what wisdom looks like in the Bible, but we've also been getting great advice about what it looks like to live well from coaches throughout sports history. There is an iconic recreation in sports history in which the USA hockey team was the underdog in the 1980 Olympics, and the guidance from a coach helped make their win happen. Check it out.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play [this clip](#) from *Miracle on Ice* (1:58–3:30). Be sure to cut at the suggested time. NOTE: There is mild language after the suggested time stamp at 3:43. We always suggest viewing the clip beforehand to make sure you think it's a video that will be a good fit for your context. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
- The USA went on to win the gold medal in hockey that year. When a coach says the right words, those words can motivate and inspire their team. But a coach's speech is not the end ... the players must listen to and act based on the coach's guidance.
- We all need guidance, no matter how young or old we are. Guidance can come from books, family, friends, and teachers, but today, much of our guidance comes from Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube, right? And I am not sure if social media is a very reliable source for guidance.

**IMAGE | Artificial Athletics**

- AI is short for artificial intelligence. One of the common ways we use AI today is to get information—to ask a chatbot for information we otherwise wouldn't know or to create things we wouldn't typically be able to create. AI can spit out answers to questions at lightning-quick speeds or generate images that look very real.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your program, use a free AI graphics website [like this](#) to generate some images based on prompts like "Michael Phelps as a baseball player" or "Beyoncé as a lacrosse player." During your program, show the images and lead a group discussion, asking teenagers to identify how and why they can tell the idea isn't based on reality. If you'd like, you can display the website on the screen and ask the group for

sports-themed prompts that you can type in and generate the images based on their suggestions. Choose some that work for your group, but here are a few to help spark your imagination in [this week's teaching folder](#).

- Some of those images look more real than others, right? Sometimes, it is easy to tell that the idea isn't real. At other times, the AI generator did such a great job it looked real. That's awesome ... and a little frightening, right?
- I'm sure you've seen images or information online being shared rapidly, yet it isn't true. Yikes! So, how do we figure out what is true and what isn't? When reading advice online or hearing guidance from people, it can be challenging to know what a good call is, what a bad call is, and what a strange one is. What can we do when we get a bunch of advice and don't know which decision to make?

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
  - **What's the worst advice you've ever gotten? What's the best advice you've ever gotten from the most unlikely place?**
  - ★ **How do you determine whether the advice you are being given is good or not?**
  - **Who are the people you can usually depend on to give you good advice? What about them makes you think you can trust them?**

**SO WHAT?** *Why does it matter to God and to us?*

## SCRIPTURE | Ephesians 1:15–23

- An Early Church leader named Paul helped start a church in what is now modern-day Turkey, in the ancient city of Ephesus. Ephesus was a big city that was a center of worship for many Greek and Roman gods. When Paul first arrived, things were not easy for him. As people began to follow Jesus, they left their old ways of living behind them. For many of them, this didn't happen overnight. It took time and wisdom to follow the direction God was leading them, and in a city like Ephesus, they always had access to the ways they used to live and worship. They were constantly faced with decisions about what it looked like to follow Jesus.
- Even though Ephesus seemed an improbable place for the good news of Jesus to spread, it did. Many became Jesus' followers through Paul's ministry. Years later, when he was under house arrest in Rome, Paul wrote this letter to the people in that city whom he came to love. In the letter's opening, there is a prayer for his friends to continue to listen to God's wisdom and direction.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Ephesians 1:15–23.*
- Paul talks about wisdom as being greater than anything we can develop independently because it comes from God. Just as Paul knew it was possible for the church in Ephesus, God made this wisdom possible for us. God can help us move from a "me-sized" wisdom to a "God-sized" wisdom.
  - We grow in wisdom as we grow in our knowledge of God. Did you catch how that passage worded it? Wisdom has a goal, not simply that we can make wise decisions. Making wise decisions is great, but wise decisions are a byproduct, not necessarily the goal.
  - The goal of wisdom is to know God better. By knowing God better, you grow in wisdom and can make better decisions beyond your strength and experience.
- Paul helps us see that wisdom comes as we focus on Jesus. Paul said, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people ..."

- We don't have to feel afraid or inadequate when we place our hope in Jesus and his rescuing grace.
- We can trust that because Jesus went to great lengths to save us and be in a relationship with us, he will continue to go to great lengths to direct us with his wisdom.
- When Jesus ascended into heaven, he told the disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit to lead, guide, and help all of his followers. The Holy Spirit—the same Spirit of God that guided Jesus, is in us and empowers us to make wise choices. When we focus on knowing God better and relying on the Holy Spirit to give us wisdom, we have hope that no matter what comes our way, God will provide what we need. Even when other people give us weird or wrong calls, we can trust that God will help us discern how to make good ones.

### OBJECT LESSON | Mixed Messages

- Let's see if we can give you an example of what this might look like. Have you ever had a friend give you advice, but you see another friend you trust doing something different? Who is the wise one? Who do you follow?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this object lesson, have two adult volunteer leaders come up front. One leader will call out a sport, and the other leader will start moving like an athlete in that sport. The rest of the group should begin to move like an athlete in that sport, too. The leaders will do this several times, but the twist comes when the first leader calls out one sport, but the second leader starts acting out a sport different than what was said verbally. They must follow what is being said verbally, not what is being acted out. After the object lesson, ask the following questions to the participants.*
  - **How did you feel when what you saw differed from what you heard? Did you feel confused or distracted?**
  - **Once you realized there were mixed messages, how did you focus on the words you needed to hear?**
- Paul knew that the people in Ephesus were receiving mixed messages. People were pulling them to listen to the direction of their culture, telling them to worship pagan gods. He knew the direction and wisdom they were being offered was temporary and shaky.
- So Paul reminded the people that knowing God and God's voice would help guide them in their decision-making. Even though the choices they saw in their city differed from what they were hearing from God, they had to concentrate on God's guidance above all else. As they kept getting to know God's voice, they would become more and more empowered to follow the Spirit's lead. The same goes for us.

### DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
  - ☆ **How do you think making wise choices helps you know God better?**
  - **What part of Ephesians 1:15–23 surprised you? Why?**
  - **Can you think of a time when following God's wisdom seemed the opposite of what everyone else told you to do? What did you do? What was the result?**

### SCRIPTURE | Proverbs 1:20–33

- Sometimes, making wise decisions means going against the norm. It means making a choice that's different from the culture around you. It means living in a way that may not always make sense to someone else who doesn't follow Jesus.
- And this can be hard, right? Sometimes, God's way may seem too complicated or too awkward. We may

feel uncomfortable making decisions different from friends, so we may be tempted to toss wisdom aside or think we can listen to God's wisdom later.

- But as we are about to read, wisdom is essential. The Old Testament book of Proverbs compares the lives of those who don't follow God's wisdom with those who do follow God's wisdom ... and the differences are like night and day.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Proverbs 1:20–33.
- Wisdom is not messing around! Scripture can serve as a warning, giving us signs to know when something is off track. The pain and agony we read about don't come only from knowing the wisdom of how God hopes for us to live and then blatantly ignoring it or doing the opposite. Proverbs points out that this can happen through complacency, which means being apathetic or ignoring God's wisdom. It helps us see pushing away wisdom and ignoring God's guidance has significant consequences.
  - Wisdom isn't a light and fluffy thing ... listening to God's guidance matters, but we shouldn't do it to avoid consequences. The Bible points out the incredible benefits of listening to God's wisdom, saying those who listen closely and follow God find safety and a sense of peace, leading to a more secure, purposeful, and hope-filled life connected to God's presence.
  - This doesn't mean if you follow God perfectly, bad things will never happen. Proverbs shows us God's wisdom leads to the safety of heart, mind, and character. Our circumstances may feel shaky, but there is security and direction when we follow God's wisdom.
- When we learn to listen to the Holy Spirit in us, we can stand firm and navigate unexpected challenges. All of this helps us see that **wise people follow God's guidance.**

**NOW WHAT?** What does God want us to do about it?

### VIDEO | A Clip from the Netflix Show *Quarterback*

- Following someone else's guidance can be difficult. However, if you have something you feel is super important and someone has a way to help you accomplish it, we all tend to listen and put their words into action. An NFL quarterback, who is constantly banged up, is in this position every week.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, show a video like this one from episode three of the Netflix show [Quarterback](#) (22:29–25:38). We always suggest viewing the clip beforehand to make sure you think it's a video that will be a good fit for your context. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#) If you don't have access to a Netflix account, you can show a picture like this from Unsplash of [someone getting physical therapy](#). These images are free for you to use under the [Unsplash license](#).
- Have any of you ever had an injury to one of your joints, like an ankle, knee, or elbow? If you have, you can probably relate to what these professional quarterbacks went through when you need to heal. You need to listen to the guidance of trained professionals to get stronger and be able to compete. When we need to practice new ways to heal, it can be challenging to know where to start. Here are a few ways you can listen to God's guidance this week.
  - **READ ABOUT GOD'S WISDOM IN THE BIBLE:** In the Bible, we read God's words, understand God's character, and see the gifts or challenges people experience when they respond (or not) to God's wisdom. Read the one chapter from the book of Proverbs every day this week. As you get to know God more, you recognize God's wisdom more clearly.
  - **ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR GUIDANCE:** The Holy Spirit lives in us, and if we ask for help, the Holy Spirit is faithful to respond. Throughout your day, when you have a decision to make, ask God's Spirit for guidance about what to do. If you feel like you heard something, write it down and put it into practice. After a few days, return to what you wrote and talk to God about what has

changed in your life.

- **LISTEN TO TRUSTED PEOPLE FOR GODLY WISDOM:** When we need wisdom, God often gives us direction and help through other people. Not everyone will be a source of God's wisdom, so if we are looking for godly advice, we need to ask people with a track record of humility, kindness, honesty, compassion, and dedication to Jesus.
- When **wise people listen to God's guidance**, they allow God's voice to help them heal and are shaped to accomplish what is in front of them.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
  - **Read Luke 2:52. How does knowing that Jesus grew in wisdom encourage your growth in wisdom?**
  - ★ **If you were going to teach someone how to follow God's guidance, how would you tell them how to do it? What would it look like for you to take your own advice?**

## RESPONSE | Playbook: Praying Scripture

- Sometimes, our friends and family may not understand why we follow Jesus. Some people think God's way is too difficult. Others believe no one else is following God's wisdom, so why should they? This week, when we are faced with a tough decision or have a difficult moment, let's intentionally rely on God's words to help guide us.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Every week of this series, there's a handout about how teenagers can listen to and apply God's wisdom. At the end of the series, you can bind them all together. For this response, print the handout included [in this week's series folder](#) and put one underneath each chair. Invite the group to connect with God all week using this "play." They can do this this week by using a Scripture passage to pray to God. Encourage them to use this when having a difficult moment or a tough decision this week.*
- These are a few ways to lean into Scriptures for God's wisdom. As you think about your life and the challenging decisions in front of you, how are you being invited to follow God's guidance?

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
  - ★ **What is an area where you can continue to grow in wisdom and follow God's wisdom in your life? What's one thing in your life that you could change that would help you do that?**
  - **Today, what is one step you will take toward following God's guidance?**

## ACTIVITY | Small Group Party Kits

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you are doing the Small Group party kits as your fall discipleship activity and haven't done them yet, this would be an awesome place to remind people about the activity. Share some of the time God has given to you with each other. All of the information for that event can be found in the [discipleship section](#) of your Grow dashboard.*
- God is so creative and wants to help lead you through whatever you are facing, so this week, remember, **wise people follow God's guidance.**