

# SERMON GUIDE

## Get Wisdom: Wisdom in Relationships

### Proverbs 13:20



**Check out the TJC Weekend Recap podcast for a more in-depth look at our sermons each week!**

**The podcast is available on all streaming platforms!**

#### **SERMON NOTES**

I want you to think about the nature of a fire. A fire can be a beautiful thing. It can provide you warmth on a cold night. It can give you light in the midst of darkness. It can be used to cook a meal. But fire, under different conditions, can burn down a house, set a forest ablaze, or scar your body. The difference isn't the fire itself, but it's context and environment. The same is true about relationships. They can be life-giving or destructive. They can bring incredible joy or lead to immense pain. And they have formative power. They are not neutral. Relationships shape you and form you. The people you surround yourself with begin to shape the person you are. We've all seen it: someone gets into a dating relationship and starts to slowly change—stops coming around church, lowers their standards, reorders their life around this person—and you think, "That's not the person I used to know." The book of Proverbs tells us there is a consequence with walking with the wise or walking with fools. Today we're going to look at this reality and explore all the different ways we interact in relationship with others and why we need to walk with the wise.

#### **Exegesis**

**Proverbs 13:20 – “Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”**

This kind of proverb is called "antithetical parallelism." It's where two lines contrast with one another to highlight a truth. It's designed to reveal a choice and a consequence. You have before you two options and you have at the end of your choice a consequence or result. The parallel here is between the one who walks with wise people (meaning, relationally) and those who are companions with fools. The purpose of this proverb is to show you that your relational involvements are forming you. There is no neutral.

**"walks with"** implies a continuous association and shared life. This isn't describing casual interactions, but a lifestyle of ongoing relationships.

**"becomes wise"** indicates that wisdom is "caught" just as much as it is "taught." This is crucial to recognize in life. So much of what we learn is not "taught" to us formally in a classroom or instructional setting. Much of what we learn and become is "caught" by our environment and relationships. When I teach leadership in different settings, this is a big point of emphasis I make. So much of what shapes behaviors is what is caught and not what is taught. In fact, if what is taught and what is caught are different from one another, what is caught is the thing that actually shapes people. This is what the proverb is teaching us. Our relationships become the setting in which wisdom and foolishness is caught. This is why who we surround ourselves with is so important.

**"companion of fools"** indicates a relational alignment, not merely occasional company. There is a root of friendship. This is the company you keep. The people you choose to surround yourself with. These are the people you give yourself to.

**"suffer harm"** shows trouble and ruin comes to those who run with fools. Being around fools is dangerous, even if you yourself are not the fool. We've seen this play out in life. Someone who doesn't get in trouble or make bad choices gets caught up with the wrong group and when they get in trouble, the person who usually doesn't get in trouble gets wrapped up in it. They suffer harm for who they hang with.

But eventually the person who surrounds themselves with fools will become foolish. You become like who you surround yourself with.

Some points of emphasis:

### **1. Wisdom is relationally transferred.**

Again, wisdom is caught, not just taught. It's deeply relational. If you walk with wise people, you will absorb their ways. The path you walk, and the people you walk with, shape how far and how safely you go.

Wisdom is not gained in isolation. Growing in spiritual wisdom requires being around the right kind of people. Growing in business wisdom requires being around the right kind of people. There's a saying that if you're the smartest person in the room, get in some more rooms. If you want to scale to new heights, get around some people already there. This is how we actually get formed and developed.

## **2. Foolishness is contagious.**

Just as iron sharpens iron (Proverbs 27:17), fools create fools. Foolishness brings collateral damage. Notice that fools are not the one's punished in the second line. It's the companions of fools that suffers harm. This is a warning for us: you don't have to be the fool to get burned. If you stand too close to fools, you will get burned.

## **3. You become like the people you spend time with.**

This is taught throughout the Bible.

### **Students/Young Adults:**

Realize that your peer group right now may be the single greatest influence on the direction of your life. If you want to be wise, don't just avoid foolishness, pursue the wise. You may not be hanging out with fools on weekends—but if you're being disciplined 5 hours a day by fools on TikTok, YouTube, or your favorite political podcast... you're still walking with them. You're listening to them. You're letting them shape you. Another aspect of being a young adult is your pursuit of finding a spouse. Second to trusting Christ and growing in your walk with Him, there is not another relationship that rivals in importance that marriage. Your spouse will be the person closest to you in your life. There is no human relationship that shapes your life more profoundly than your spouse. You cannot make decisions about a spouse purely on whether you think they're hot. You are yoked in values, decisions, direction, and influence.

The person you as a Christian should look for is someone who:

- Walks in the fear of the LORD
- Seeks to be wise and doesn't live in folly
- Helps you to be a better Christian

Marriage doesn't fix character; it amplifies it. If you think you can marry a fool but "change them later," you're setting yourself up for harm.

I had a conversation with a dance dad about how concerning it is for me as a dad with daughters about the prevalence of pornography amongst young men. It shapes how they view women, understand sex, and all sorts of things. If a young woman doesn't choose a husband wisely, these kinds of things will show up in the marriage and create massive problems and hurt in the future. This is why wisdom in pursuing a spouse is so important.

### **Adults:**

Assess the voices and relationships shaping your thinking: friends, mentors, podcasts, media intake. Are they cultivating discernment, humility, godliness or are they stirring anxiety, cynicism, selfishness, etc.? In your marriages, be wise companions to each other. Speak the truth in love to each other being quick to forgive one another and pursue peace over being right.

### **Parents:**

Don't just teach your kids to avoid bad friends. Teach them to recognize character and seek out the right kind of friends. Also parents, let's talk a moment about wisdom in your relationship with your children. When your kids are younger, it is not your job to be their buddy or best friend. You are their parent. You are their authority. This is why you need to take your role seriously to discipline them and correct them. It is vital that parents discipline consistently but without harshness (Eph. 6:4). Teach proactively, not just reactively. Correct folly quickly and early before patterns of behavior harden. These things are not to be mean, but to form your children in godliness and wisdom. If you try to be their friend, you'll tend to neglect this aspect of parenting and make them feel like equals with a say-so in the matter, rather than the child under the authority of the parent. Now, as your children get older, it is important to understand how the relationship does begin to change from "I'm the parent with authority over you, listen to what I say" to "I'm the parent, who you trust and respect, you listen because we have a relationship." In other words, it moves from one of positional authority to relational influence. That's what it becomes when they're adults.

## **4. Wisdom requires intentional community.**

It's not enough to avoid fools—you must walk with the wise. You need people in your life who:

- Tell you the truth, even when it's hard
- Cheer for your sanctification, not your sin
- Know your weaknesses and love you anyway

Two leaders at TJC had a public disagreement on social media, things were said they shouldn't have said. Friends in the church talked to them and both owned it and apologized to one another. This never happens in most places. But it is able to happen in the intentional community of believers who love each other despite their flaws and push each other toward holiness.

Don't just flee toxic people—find sharpening ones. Proverbs 27:6 reminds us, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend...”

One famous quote that captures all of this is: “You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.” The core belief is that your mindset, habits, character, and even income level tend to reflect those closest to you. We are shaped by the people we're with. Choose wisely. This poses an interesting question to consider: who are your 5?

Practical Challenges:

- Who is sharpening you?
- Who do you need to forgive?
- Who needs your words of encouragement this week?
- Are your relationships moving you toward or away from Jesus?
- Are people in relationship with you moved toward or away from Jesus?
- Who in your life is helping you grow in your faith?

### **Close**

Jesus surrounded Himself with disciples to walk with. He called regular, everyday people to Himself to follow Him. There were fishermen, a tax collector, a political zealot, and other normal dudes. They would eventually become apostles and leaders of movements that spread around the world and continue 2,000 years later. How? Jesus invited them into His wisdom by proximity to walking with Him.

It was quite a contrast between walking with Jesus and walking with Pharisees. Jesus warned about the blind leading the blind (Matthew 15:14). But those who are in Christ are not only made righteous and forgiven of our sins, but we are given His Spirit and invited to walk with Him in wisdom. Walking with Jesus is the relationship above all relationships that forms us into people of wisdom. Spend time with the Lord daily. Seek Him through the Word, prayer, and His people.



## LOOK BACK

- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you grow in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you go to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?
- What is a sin you have been struggling with that you need to repent of?



## LOOK UP

- **REVIEW**

- Read Proverbs 13:20 and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different translation.
- Additional Scripture
  - Proverbs 4:11-14
  - Proverbs 12:4
  - Proverbs 13:24
  - Proverbs 19:18
  - Proverbs 22:15
  - Proverbs 22:24-25
  - Proverbs 29:15
  - Proverbs 31:10
  - 1 Corinthians 15:33

- **DISCUSS**

- What does Proverbs 13:20 teach us about the influence of relationships?
- How is wisdom "caught" rather than just "taught"?
- Why is foolishness considered contagious in the context of Proverbs 13:20?
- How do close relationships (dating, marriage, best friends) shape our character and direction in life?
- What are some modern examples of "walking with fools"?
- Why is intentional community necessary for walking in wisdom?
- What practical steps can someone take to evaluate their relational influences?
- How does Jesus model the principle of walking with the wise?
- What is a practical step you can take as a result of this sermon?

## LOOK AHEAD



- **BUILD UP | SEND OUT**

- How are you making yourself known at church this week?
- How are you growing to know Christ better this week?
- How are you making Christ known this week?

- **PRAYER**

- **Pray over any request from your group members.**
- **Pray for our team:** Nick Judd (Discipleship Pastor)
- **Pray for our replanters:** Christ's Fellowship
- **Pray for our short-term teams:**
  - Kenya Team departing on June 29, 2025
  - Europe Student Team departing on July 6, 2025
  - Indonesia Team departing on August 11, 2025
  - Rome Team departing on November 15, 2025
- **Pray for our long-term units on the mission field:**
  - The Wilsons
  - The Grays
  - The Starks
- **Pray for the unreached.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>