



## **“Stop For Directions”**

### **FUEL**

#### **Small Group Plan**

Ted Engstrom, in his book *The Pursuit Of Excellence*, tells a story about a bird of prey. It's a sad story from American Indian lore about an eagle that doesn't know it's made to fly. Apparently, while still in its egg, it was placed in the nest of a prairie chicken. Ted Engstrom tells the rest of the story.

All his life, the ... Eagle, thinking he was a prairie chicken, did what the prairie chickens did. He scratched in the dirt for seeds and insects to eat. He clucked and cackled. And he flew in a brief thrashing of wings and flurry of feathers no more than a few feet off the ground. After all, that's how prairie chickens were supposed to fly. Years passed. And the ... Eagle grew very old. One day, he saw a magnificent bird far above him in the cloudless sky. Hanging with graceful majesty on the powerful wind currents, it soared with scarcely a beat of its strong golden wings. What a beautiful bird said the... Eagle to his neighbor. What it it? That's an eagle - the chief of the birds, the neighbor clucked. But don't give it a second thought. You could never be like him. So the ... Eagle never gave it another thought. And it died thinking it was a prairie chicken.

It's a tragic parable about missing the target. Ignoring his design to fly this eagle scratched in the dirt. Is it possible for a person to live their whole life with the wrong viewpoint, for the wrong reason? Unfortunately, the book of Ecclesiastes says "yes." This is why it describes in detail all the variations on under the sun living. This is why it calls it all "meaningless" "empty" a "chasing after wind." This is why the book closes with an appeal to the young to not miss the target, to not scratch the dirt when they are made to fly, to not live their entire life under the sun, never rising above it. As an old man Solomon has been describing himself, scratching in the dirt under the sun, looking for the meaning of life. And for a man who values wisdom, under the sun living seems foolish. Maybe this is why chapter 10 seems devoted to the subject of foolishness.

#### **OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...**

- How would you describe a foolish person?
- From your own life give an example of foolishness.

## LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

### ***THE FOOLISH LIFE*** ***Ecclesiastes 10:1-3***

<sup>1</sup> *As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor* <sup>2</sup> *The heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left.* <sup>3</sup> *Even as he walks along the road, the fool lacks sense and shows everyone how stupid he is.*

- Why is it easier to make a “stink” than to create sweetness?
- How can foolish behavior be clear to everyone except the fool?

### ***THE FOOLISH LEADER*** ***Ecclesiastes 10:4-7***

<sup>4</sup> *If a ruler’s anger rises against you, do not leave your post; calmness can lay great errors to rest.* <sup>5</sup> *There is an evil I have seen under the sun, the sort of error that arises from a ruler:* <sup>6</sup> *Fools are put in many high positions, while the rich occupy the low ones.* <sup>7</sup> *I have seen slaves on horseback, while princes go on foot like slaves.*

- With verse 4 in mind read Proverbs 29:11, 1:29, 25:28. Why do angry leaders often become foolish leaders?
- How do verses 5-7 describe how Solomon compromised his own values as a leader?

### ***THE FOOLISH WORKER*** ***Ecclesiastes 10:8-11***

<sup>8</sup> *Whoever digs a pit may fall into it; whoever breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake.* <sup>9</sup> *Whoever quarries stones may be injured by them; whoever splits logs may be endangered by them.* <sup>10</sup> *If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed but skill will bring success.* <sup>11</sup> *If a snake bites before it is charmed, there is no profit for the charmer.*

- What is Solomon trying to say in this unusual collection of thoughts?
- Solomon often says in Ecclesiastes that building is a way to seek fulfillment. But in our creative efforts what is the basic difference between wise and foolish building?

### ***THE FOOLISH TALKER*** ***Ecclesiastes 10:12-15***

<sup>12</sup> *Words from a wise man’s mouth are gracious, but a fool is consumed by his own lips.* <sup>13</sup> *At the beginning his words are folly; at the end they are wicked madness—* <sup>14</sup> *and the fool multiplies words. No one knows what is*

*coming— who can tell him what will happen after him? <sup>15</sup> A fool's work wearies him; he does not know the way to town.*

- How would you describe “gracious” words (v. 12a)?
- In the end, how is the fool hurt by his own words (v. 12b)?
- Why does the fool dominate conversations rather than listen (v. 14)?
- Even though no one knows the future, why does the fool think he knows (vs. 14b-15)?

### **USE IT / APPLY IT ...**

- Take each foolish lifestyle and give them some advice (wisdom):
- What advice would you give to the foolish leader?  
What advice would you give to the foolish worker?  
What advice would you give to the foolish talker?
- If you had to opportunity, how would you help someone to see that we are created by God to “fly” rather than “scratch in the dirt?”
- How does “under the sun” “foolish” living keep us on the ground when we are designed by God to be in the air?
- Close in prayer asking for God’s protection from “foolish” “under the sun” thinking.