

"What Do You Think?"

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Theme: You open your mind when you open your ears.

Text: Proverbs 12:15

Here's a thought: Benjamin Franklin advised, "Learn from the skillful. He who teaches himself hath a fool for his master."

What we can learn from a dog (from Shiloh Ranch):

1. Never pass up the opportunity to go for a joyride.
2. Allow the experience of fresh air and the wind in your face to be pure ecstasy.
3. When loved ones come home, always run to greet them.
4. When it's in your best interest, practice obedience.
5. Let others know when they've invaded your territory.
6. Take naps and stretch before rising.
7. Run, romp and play daily.
8. Eat with gusto and enthusiasm.
9. Be loyal.
10. Never pretend to be something you're not.
11. If what you need lies buried, dig until you find it.
12. When someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by and nuzzle them gently.
13. Thrive on attention and let people touch you.
14. Avoid biting when a simple growl will do.
15. On hot days, drink lots of water and lie under a shady tree.
16. When you're happy, dance around and wag your entire body.
17. No matter how often you're scolded, don't buy into the guilt thing and pout ... run right back and make friends.
18. Delight in the simple joy of a long walk.

We can learn good things even from dogs and other unexpected sources. A major difference between the wise and the foolish is the openness to learn and to grow. The Book of Proverbs goes to great lengths to point out these contrasts.

One example is found in Proverbs 12:15: The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice. NIV

Proverbs 12:15: Fools think they need no advice, but the wise listen to others. NLT

You'd be surprised:

How Foolish You Can Be



The way of a fool seems right to him. The enemy loves to come in and bring down people one at a time. The serpent did this in the Garden of Eden when he started by tempting Eve alone. Isn't it curious that the serpent did not tempt Adam and Eve together? He knew they were stronger together and weaker when separated and isolated. It could have been a much different result if Adam and Eve were tempted while they were together.

Jesus gives us an example of how foolish people can be in Luke 12:15-21:

15 Then he [Jesus] said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." 16 And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. 17 He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'" 18 Then he said, "This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods." 19 And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." 20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'" 21 This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God. NIV

This rich man headed down the road to destruction while he kept feeding on his own advice. His biggest problem was not that his barns were full but that he was full of himself. In verses 17 to 19 he thought to himself and he said to himself. But in verse 20 God said to him, "You fool! While he looked wise to himself and to the world around him his series of self-directed decisions led to eternal damnation.

Benjamin Franklin advised, “Learn from the skillful. He who teaches himself hath a fool for his master.”

The August 17, 2016 Calgary Herald reported

(<http://calgaryherald.com/news/crime/police-warn-of-scam-using-gift-cards-to-pay-fake-debts>):

A Calgary woman got a message from a man calling himself Ryan Smith, claiming to be from the Canada Revenue Agency.

When she called back, the woman was shocked when Smith told her she owed nearly \$10,000 in back taxes. The woman said she was transferred back and forth between a number of people, claiming she would be arrested if she didn't pay the debt immediately.

In reality, the call from Smith was the first step in a gift card scam.

The latest victim is an elderly woman, whose name has been withheld, suffering from a number of health issues, including a traumatic brain injury. When she first got the call from Smith, the victim said she was in a panic because of her condition. But looking back now, she said it was obvious the call was part of a scam.

“Being a person like me, it took me way over the top and I feel so stupid,” the woman said. “And I'm not like that, I'm not a stupid person.”

The victim said the men on the other end of the phone told her to visit a number of grocery stores and purchase iTunes gift cards to pay her debts. The woman said she was instructed to “not tell anyone” at the stores what she was doing and to keep the alleged scammers on a cellphone while she bought the cards.

In total, the woman gave scammers the codes for \$9,900 worth of iTunes cards.

Police said victims are told to purchase gift cards and give the activation codes to scammers. The codes for the cards are then sold on the black market.

Calgary police confirmed that between June 1 and July 21 victims lost over \$132,000 in scams using the iTunes gift card method.

There is a common denominator in scam victims – they act and speak without seeking the input of others. A wise man learns from his mistakes; a wiser man learns from others' mistakes. I was scammed on an investment “opportunity” because I did not seek counsel. I would have fallen for a couple Internet scams

if I would not have searched for more information online. It seems like scams are multiplying for technological reasons but I think it is also for social reasons.

We in Canada are more isolated and detached from one another than ever. Turn back the pages of time and you would find settlers spread throughout Canada and the United States, some separated from their neighbours by miles in the country while others migrated to towns and cities. Ironically, the population was sparser and the spaces between houses were larger but people were more connected. People would gather in church buildings, community centres, coffee shops and taverns to talk about what was happening in their lives. Living in houses with high walls, locks, security systems and garages with remote openers, we now have much less contact with our neighbours. Farmers would share equipment and work together in bringing in the harvest but now everyone owns their own tractors, swathers and combines. Using social media, we can be very selective in the life we portray.



Seriously, what would your life look like if someone pieced together all your Facebook posts? For some it would appear that life is one long holiday with nothing but fantastic experiences.

A result of such isolation is that we are vulnerable. We are vulnerable to temptation, abuse, addictions, scams, heresy (false teaching), discouragement, fears and foolish decisions.

When was the last time you sought advice on an investment, a vehicle purchase, a house purchase, a career decision or a parenting issue?

You'd be surprised:

How Foolish You Can Be

How Wise Others Can Be



Even though our governments are formed by popular opinion, I am not saying that each of us should be governed by popular opinion. We would have received much different advice from public opinion when our country was formed in 1867 on such matters of doctor-assisted dying, abortion, debt, marijuana and marriage.

Winston Churchill reasoned with his dry sarcasm, "The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter."

It was the religious establishment manipulating a crowd that resulted in the crucifixion of Christ. Jesus warned us in Matthew 7:13-14 that wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it (NIV). Our decisions and priorities should be based squarely upon the Bible, the unchanging Word of God and the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Let's consider how the early church dealt with an issue that threatened to rock its very foundations in Acts 15:1-2:

1 Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." 2 This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. NIV

In Acts 15:6, "The apostles and elders met to consider this question." NIV

Acts 15:12-13:

12 The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. 13 When they finished, James spoke up: "Brothers, listen to me." NIV

Acts 15:22-31:

22 Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers. 23 With them they sent the following

letter: The apostles and elders, your brothers, To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings. 24 We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. 25 So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul - 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. 28 It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: 29 You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell. 30 The men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. 31 The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message. NIV

Many modern North American Christians would have responded very differently to such issues. We would all go home to pray about it and read our Bibles. We might search the Internet for articles on the subject. Some of us might talk with family and close friends. How many of us would have gathered together to pray and to discuss the issues? Most would move on with our individualistic, independent lives and our hard-boiled opinions.

American author Stephen King's advice on writing could apply to life, "Write with the door closed, rewrite with the door open." We can't *live* on people's advice but we would be wise to heed it along the way.

Believers gathered in Jerusalem to discern God's voice together. These followers knew instinctively that the Lord speaks to each of us individually *and* through our brothers and sisters in Christ. As a result, they could conclude, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."



We moved to our acreage in 2006 and we bought an old tractor to deal with the snow in the winter and weeds in the summer. One day I was checking the tire pressure and noticed some fluid coming out through the valve. Instantly I concluded that I must drain the water from inside these tires so I released more air and the fluid that came with it. After several minutes of this, however, I had another thought, "Maybe I should ask Dad if he has had water

in his tractor tires before.” My father had been a farmer all his life so I asked him about it. I learned something that day – the “water” was actually calcium chloride, added to the rear tires to add weight and enhance traction. I had grown up on the farm but I didn’t know this! I was embarrassed yet relieved that I had not emptied the tires before I asked for advice.

In July of 2007 my dad abruptly breathed his last breath and left us. I did not have the opportunity to say goodbye and I realized that I had suddenly become an orphan. I was an adult but neither of my parents were still living. It is a strange, lonely feeling to come to grips with my parents’ mortality. Who could I talk to about tractor tires, finances and life? No one can ever replace my parents, but thankfully the Lord continues to provide wise people who know a lot about areas where I need help. I just need to ask and listen.

Do you regularly draw from the value of wisdom and insight of those in your life? Do you look and listen for it?

You’d be surprised:

How Foolish You Can Be
How Wise Others Can Be

You open your mind when you open your ears.



