



Keep Heart!

Guard Your Heart from Folly:
Proverbs 4:23. Psalm 14:1

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. – Prov 4:23
The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” – Ps. 14:1a

It Seemed like a good idea at the time...

Share the most memorable (think boneheaded) move that preceded this infamous phrase.

No Atheists in Foxholes?

- ? What is the different between a philosophical atheist and a practical atheist?
- ? How can a believer become a practical atheist? What causes “sold-out” believers to “sell-out”?
- ? Why is it often said that there are “no atheists in fox holes?” Read the following excerpts from Phillip Paulson’s experience in Vietnam¹ and discuss as a group.

“I was (and still am) an Atheist in a Foxhole” – Phillip K. Paulson

*I suffered through horrifying moments, expecting to be killed. I was convinced that no cosmic rescuer would save me. Besides, **I believed life after death was merely wishful thinking.***

*One day I heard the chaplain preach that we should be happy and willing to die so that we could be with Jesus. After hearing that, some people praised God. I cursed God. **Cursing and swearing were very therapeutic and healthy for me; it gave me the courage of Hercules. It gave me confidence in my ability and skill to stay alive.***

*I was determined to live on this side of the grave. I could not believe that there was a better life than this one, so **I rejected the foolish notion that my existence was based upon the extremes of God and the devil, heaven and hell, and life after death.***

When facing death, my thought was to stay alive. I was just infuriated by all the people praying and wasting my precious time and theirs. When the chips are down and there’s no one to turn to for help, and you’ve found out that it’s just you who has been helping all along, that’s the big difference.

I discovered in combat that there is no one to turn to — it’s just you who has been saving your own (butt) all along.

AFTER WITNESSING
THE DEAD AND
WOUNDED DURING
MY FIRST
“FIREFIGHT,” I
LOOKED UP AND
SAID, “YOU
SADISTIC GOD!
YOU’RE NOT
WORTHY OF MY
WORSHIP!”

¹ <https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/i-was-an-atheist-in-a-foxhole/>

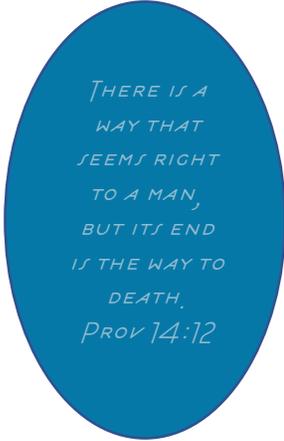
I was surprised to meet the chaplain again prior to departing Vietnam. He rhetorically inquired if I was ever “saved” and if I had ever felt the presence of the Holy Spirit. He had heard through the grapevine that I didn’t believe in God, and he expressed fearful concern that if I died I would go to hell. I told him not to bother worrying about me. I was happy to live a long and happy life. Before saying goodbye, I left him with one inspirational thought:

“If you think the Holy Spirit is great, try thinking freely — unfettered by superstitions and ritualistic creeds.”

Tragic Logic

- ? Can you relate to Phillips logic? Why is his argument so compelling to so many?
- ? How would you share with him that he’s on a fool’s errand, trading the truth for a lie?
- ? Which Approach would turn him away and which approach would cause him to reconsider his argument?
- ? Read 1 Cor 2:6-9. What is meant by “not a wisdom of this age?” How can we discern which wisdom we’re drawing from? And before you use the proverbial “pray, read your Bible, go to church,” remember that there are/were once godly men and women who used to draw from godly wisdom who now are lost in the sea of human logic.
- ? Speaking of logic...Is it logical to believe that there is a God who spoke everything into existence; a God who allowed evil to destroy just so He could rescue us all? How can Christians be assured that we’re not the ones being deceived?
- ? Read J.I. Packer’s quote below. How would an atheist respond to Packer’s logic? How would you gently show the atheist that he is on a fool’s errand with his human logic?

“We are cruel to ourselves if we try to live in this world without knowing about the God whose world it is and who runs it. The world becomes a strange, mad, painful place, and life in it a disappointing and unpleasant business, for those who do not know about God. Disregard the study of God, and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfold, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you. This way you can waste your life and lose your soul.” – J. I. Packer



Keeping My Own Heart From Folly

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. – Prov 1:7

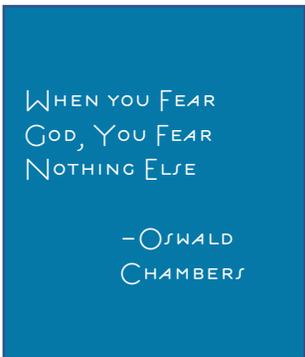
• Through fear:

- ? Is there any place in a love relationship to use fear? Why or why not? What is the relationship correlation between love and fear? What kind of fears draws us closer into a trust relationship and what kind of fear sends us running from one?
- ? How is the fear of God different that the emotional worries that intrude every day?
- ? How is Hell often looked at in the context of fear? Is it meant to scare you into repentance or is it used in the context of a love relationship that draws you closer to Him? Why?

• Through Wisdom

- ? Read this quote from James. How does wisdom guard our hearts from folly?

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. – James 3:17
- ? What wisdom have you employed to prevent being stampeded by the folly of our time?



Walking in Proper Fear and Wisdom:

- ? In 1527, Martin Luther was faced with helping lead the church through the Bubonic Plague. His timely for today answer was penned to his fellow minister, Rev. Dr. John Hess. Read his letter and discuss how we can apply his logic to our situation today.

"I SHALL ASK GOD MERCIFULLY TO PROTECT US. THEN I SHALL FUMIGATE, HELP PURIFY THE AIR, ADMINISTER MEDICINE AND TAKE IT. I SHALL AVOID PLACES AND PERSONS WHERE MY PRESENCE IS NOT NEEDED IN ORDER NOT TO BECOME CONTAMINATED AND THUS PERCHANCE INFLICT AND POLLUTE OTHERS AND SO CAUSE THEIR DEATH AS A RESULT OF MY NEGLIGENCE. IF GOD SHOULD WISH TO TAKE ME, HE WILL SURELY FIND ME AND I HAVE DONE WHAT HE HAS EXPECTED OF ME AND SO I AM NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR EITHER MY OWN DEATH OR THE DEATH OF OTHERS. IF MY NEIGHBOR NEEDS ME HOWEVER I SHALL NOT AVOID PLACE OR PERSON BUT WILL GO FREELY AS STATED ABOVE. SEE THIS IS SUCH A GOD-FEARING FAITH BECAUSE IT IS NEITHER BRASH NOR FOOLHARDY AND DOES NOT TEMPT GOD." — MARTIN LUTHER

- ? As a church, we are walking through some very difficult circumstances. Not one mind you, but many...at the same time! How should we temper grace, mercy, fear and anger, all without sin all at the same time? Is this a fool's errand?

Wisdom's Kingdom: For the Gospel:

- ? How does the Gospel put to rest the biggest fears we face?
- ? What benefit can come from seeking the godly council of our elder brothers and sisters? What perspective can they bring the younger generation that cannot be found out on their own?

- ? Read Proverbs 2:16-19. The seduction of adultery has snared many whom once lived a life of godliness. The vast majority of men and women caught up in adultery did not think they'd ever end up in this destructive sin, and most certainly didn't purposefully start down that road. What causes this deceitful slide into destructive sin?

THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM, AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY ONE IS INSIGHT. PROVERBS 9:10

- ? How can one rest assured that they are listening to the voice of wisdom that will lead to the throne of King Jesus and bring the greatest good for His kingdom and His glory?

- ? Is the exercise of discerning godly wisdom always black and white, or can there be subjective conclusions that can both be right yet contradictory at the same time? Is it possible to discern which one has exercised the correct wisdom? How would you exercise wisdom in counseling a family's heartbreaking decision to either take the baby's life to save the life of the mother (or vice versa)? What decision gets made and why? Is there right-decision certainty here? How can we best respond to an untenable situation that brings comfort to a hurting family and brings God His greatest glory.

- ? How can the Fear of the Lord help us draw the right conclusion from folly to wisdom?

