

Sermon-Based Small Group Bible Study

Practical Wisdom: Avoiding Bad Influence (Proverbs 1:8–19)

Open

Select one of these “ice breakers” to get the conversation going toward the study.

- Who is your favorite villain from movies or TV? What makes that character your favorite?
- Name something you learned from a parent or another adult in your childhood that has stuck with you. Why has that proved important to you?
- Most of us have had a “close call” or two, a tough situation in which we escape without harm. Tell us about one of your close calls.

Dig

After reading Proverbs 1:8–19 together, discuss these questions.

1. Verse 9 compares wisdom to accessories that make a person more beautiful. Have you experienced something like that, someone whose godly wisdom gave you and others high regard for that person? Tell about that.
2. Verses 11 to 14 describe ruthless bandits planning a violent robbery. What is your reaction to that description?
3. In verse 14 the bandits pledge to share their spoils. What do you think of that promise in its context? Can these people be trusted to pay their pledge to one another?
4. Verses 15 to 18 warn against joining the bandits. What different reasons not to join them do you see offered here? What does verse 18 especially emphasize?
5. Now consider verse 19. To what is this passage comparing banditry? How does that change your perspective on the previous discussion? What insight or warning does it give you?
6. Pastor Bryan pointed out that the warning against evildoing is not merely “you’re better than that” but “justice is coming,” God’s final justice. How does that reality change our perspective on evildoing and greed?

Summary: when from the perspective of God’s wisdom we see evil for what it is, it is repugnant to us. We might think that our “minor” injustices are nothing compared to violent robbery, but such is not the case. Evil destroys not just those whom are victimized but those who do the victimizing.

Reflect

Use any of these prompts to encourage group members to apply the text to their own experiences.

- Pastor Bryan suggested that greed and envy entice us in our desires for control, power, approval, or comfort. Which of these works most powerfully in you? What do you think God’s wisdom says in response?
- How have you seen doing evil to others making the evildoer a victim? What does this tell us about the importance of repentance? Of forgiveness?
- If unjust gain is as harmful as this text says, what commitments do you need to make to avoid it and embrace God’s wisdom instead?

Pray

Invite the group to pray together using any of these suggestions.

- What needs have you heard from others in the group that we can pray about?
- What do you need from God to help you understand your own foolish, harmful behaviors and to integrate God's wisdom more? How can we pray for that?
- What kind of person does this text motivate you to become? Let's pray for God's help in becoming that kind of person.