

# Ecclesiastes 10:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The labour of the foolish wearith every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.

## Analysis

**The labour of the foolish wearith every one of them** (עֲמַל הַכְסִּילִים תִּיגָעֵנּוּ, amal hakseilim teyagge'ennu)—'the toil of fools wearies him,' from yaga (to be weary, exhausted, spent). **Because he knoweth not how to go to the city** (אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדַע לָלֶכֶת אֶל־עִיר, asher lo-yada lalekheth el-ir)—literally 'for he knows not to go to the city,' possibly meaning he lacks basic navigational knowledge or can't find the most basic destinations.

This proverb captures folly's futility: the fool exhausts himself through misdirected effort because he lacks fundamental orientation. The phrase 'how to go to the city' likely means basic competence—knowing the way to the central, obvious destination. In ancient agrarian society, 'the city' (ir) represented commerce, governance, civilization itself—not knowing the way there suggests profound incompetence. Alternatively, it may be metaphorical: lacking direction toward life's proper goal. Jesus used similar imagery: 'Enter by the narrow gate... the way is easy that leads to destruction' (Matthew 7:13-14). The fool labors vigorously but toward wrong ends, achieving exhaustion without accomplishment. Proverbs 10:23 states, 'Doing wrong is like a joke to a fool, but wisdom is pleasure to a man of understanding.'

## Historical Context

Ancient Palestinian geography centered on walled cities as hubs of trade, protection, and governance. Rural populations regularly traveled to cities for

commerce and festivals. Being unable to find the city indicated either severe ignorance or disorientation.

## Related Passages

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**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

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1. In what areas might you be expending enormous energy but moving in wrong directions due to lack of wisdom?
2. How does knowing the 'way to the city'—life's proper goal and methods—prevent wasted effort?
3. What is the spiritual 'city' believers should know how to reach, and what keeps people from finding it?

## Interlinear Text

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לֹא	אִשׁ רַ	תִּיגַע נֹ	הַכְסִילִ יִם	עֲמֵ ל
H3808	H834	H3021	H3684	H5999
			of the foolish	The labour
עִיר:	אֶל	לְלָכָת	יֵד ע	
H5892	H413	H1980	H3045	
to the city			every one of them because he knoweth	

## Additional Cross-References

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**Isaiah 57:1** (Parallel theme): The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.

**Psalms 107:4** (Parallel theme): They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.

**Psalms 107:7** (Parallel theme): And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.

**Ecclesiastes 10:3** (Parallel theme): Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool.

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