

# Ecclesiastes 7:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.

## Analysis

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**It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools**—the Hebrew *ge'arat chakham* (גְּעָרַת חָכָם, rebuke of the wise) refers to correction, reproof, or sharp words from someone with discernment. *Shir kesilim* (שִׁיר כְּסִילִים, song of fools) means the flattery, empty praise, or frivolous entertainment that fools offer. The comparison is stark: painful truth from the wise surpasses pleasant falsehood from fools.

This wisdom appears throughout Proverbs: "Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Proverbs 27:5-6). "He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue" (Proverbs 28:23). Wise correction, though uncomfortable, leads to life; foolish flattery, though pleasant, leads to destruction. The verse challenges preferences for affirmation over accountability, exposing the danger of surrounding yourself with yes-men rather than truth-tellers.

## Historical Context

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Ancient Near Eastern royal courts featured both wise counselors and flattering courtiers. Kings who heeded wise rebuke prospered (David and Nathan—2 Samuel 12:1-13); those who preferred flattery failed (Rehoboam rejecting elders' counsel—1 Kings 12:6-16). Israel's prophets delivered rebukes to kings and people, often facing hostility (Jeremiah 20:1-2; 38:6). Jesus rebuked disciples (Matthew 16:23), religious leaders (Matthew 23), and churches (Revelation 2-3). Paul commanded

Timothy: "Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2), yet warned that people would prefer teachers who tickle ears (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Church history shows that accepting rebuke marks spiritual maturity—Augustine's Confessions, Luther's reforms, Wesley's accountability groups all involved receiving correction. Modern self-esteem culture resists rebuke, preferring affirmation.

## Related Passages

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**Psalms 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

## Study Questions

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1. Do you have relationships characterized by honest rebuke and accountability, or do you primarily surround yourself with people who affirm and flatter?
2. How do you typically respond to correction—with defensive anger, or with grateful receptivity to truth that might help you grow?

## Interlinear Text

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ט וֹב	שְׁמַע ע	בְּעֵבֶר ת	חָכָם	מֵאִישׁ	שְׁמַע ע	שִׁיר
<b>It is better</b>	<b>to hear</b>	<b>the rebuke</b>	<b>of the wise</b>	<b>than for a man</b>	<b>to hear</b>	<b>the song</b>
H2896	H8085	H1606	H2450	H376	H8085	H7892

בְּסִילִים:

**of fools**

H3684

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 141:5** (Parallel theme): Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.

**Revelation 3:19** (Parallel theme): As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

**Proverbs 13:18** (Parallel theme): Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.

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