



Dealing with Foolish People



Lesson Two

April 12, 2022

Wisdom Literature Books in the Bible:

- Proverbs
- Job
- Ecclesiastes
- Psalms
- Song of Songs

Proverbs 1:7:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

There are two kinds of people depicted in these Wisdom Literature books, especially in Proverbs:

1. Those who want to be wise and discerning
2. Those who despise wisdom and instruction

Definition of a Fool:

A fool is a person who is thoughtless, self-centered, and obviously indifferent to God.

Our Great Need of Wisdom

Think of some decisions you have made in your life that you now recognize as unwise. How different would your life have been had you instead made a wise decision?

The good news is, we can be wise and grow wiser.

James 1:5:

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

Solomon's Prayer for wisdom:

1 Kings 3:5 – 12

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

Solomon answered, "You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.

"Now, LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"



The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, “Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.”

What do we learn from Solomon’s prayer?

Have you ever prayed for a discerning heart? God is waiting and willing to give us wisdom, but we have to ask. How quickly do you seek God’s wisdom before you make a decision? Look at the blessings promised when you get wisdom:

Proverbs 3:13 – 18:

Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her; those who hold her fast will be blessed.

Here is what wisdom will do for you:

Proverbs 4:5 – 9:

Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or turn away from them. Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. Cherish her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. She will give you a garland to grace your head and present you with a glorious crown.”

What does this passage tell you that wisdom will do for you?

Proverbs 24:14:

Know also that wisdom is like honey for you: If you find it, there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.

What disciplines do you have in your life that help you “get wisdom”?

Proverbs 4:5 says we are also to “get understanding.” What is the difference in wisdom and understanding?

How do we become wiser?

Here are some practical things you can do:

1. Try new things.
2. Talk to wise people –maybe people from different backgrounds and with different perspectives from yours, and pay attention to what you can learn from them.
3. Do it the hard way.
Technology is one of the biggest culprits to decreased cognitive function because it makes certain tasks so much easier. If you want to become wiser, try old-school methods. Do it the hard way.
4. Make mistakes.
Anything worth doing is worth doing wrong until you can get it right! Experience makes us wiser.

Are there any “fools” in your life?

Could it be true that you may be dealing with a fool but you have not recognized it?

Could a true Christian really be a fool?

Psalm 14:1:

The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.

Psalm 53:1:

The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, and their ways are vile; there is no one who does good.

These passages do not say that every fool says there is no God, rather that to say there is no God defines you as a fool.

We know from Scripture that those who have been born-again can have very poor behavior—foolish behavior. Paul’s letters to the early church are full of admonitions and corrections to new believers.

1 Corinthians 1:11:

My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you.

1 Corinthians 11:18:

In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it.

James 2:20 – 24:

You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

You just can’t have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you without some evidence of it at least occasionally.

But it is not ours to make those calls; only God knows their hearts.

Symptoms of a Relationship with a Fool

In her book, *Fool-proofing Your Life*, Jan Silvius gives very helpful biblical guidance in this regard. She says that there are fairly common symptoms of a person who is entangled with a fool on a regular basis:

- You can’t figure out why this relationship can’t work.
- You fear losing your relationship with this person.
- You feel guilty for not knowing how to deal with them and find a solution for them.
- You know you have to do something but you don’t know what you need to do to change the destructive characteristics of the relationship.

The problem may be that the fool you are dealing with has some nice characteristics, some wonderful qualities mixed with their destructive behavior.

Romans 12 gives a lot of good principles for relationships:

Romans 12:14 – 18:

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

As Christ-followers, it should be our goal to live at peace with everyone if possible. But when you are in a relationship where only one person wants to live at peace, is that possible?

There's one thing we learn from Proverbs—and from experience—and that is, *you* cannot change a fool and the sad truth is, rarely do dyed-in-the-wool fools ever change.

Proverbs 13:19: *A longing fulfilled is sweet to the soul, but fools detest turning from evil.*

Proverbs 18:2: *Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions.*

Proverbs 26:11: *As a dog returns to its vomit, so fools repeat their folly.*

In her book, Jan Silvius identifies the following characteristics of a relationship with a fool:

- Chaotic ups and downs
 - Periods of extreme emotional and relational tension
 - Walking on eggshells
 - Confusion
 - Desperation
 - Despair
 - Fear
 - Guilt
 - Being blamed for whatever is “wrong”
 - Blaming yourself for your difficult person's behavior
 - Feeling crazy
 - Feeling off balance
 - Feeling like a hostage
 - Feeling manipulated
 - Feeling controlled
- (page 17)

Obviously, the closer you are to this fool, how frequently you must deal with them, the greater the challenge in dealing with them.

This week pray two specific things:

- God, give me wisdom and discernment. Show me where I now lack wisdom. Help me to seek your wisdom before every decision.
- God, give me wisdom about the people in my life. Help me to see them as you see them, and if indeed I am dealing with a person you identify as a fool, show me what my responsibility is to them and how I should respond to them.