



Dealing with Foolish People



Lesson Three

April 19, 2022

Review

Proverbs teach wisdom through short points and principles but should not be regarded as “laws” or even universal promises. Proverbs are not always intended to be applied ‘across the board’ to every situation without qualification.

Proverbs 26:7: Like the useless legs of one who is lame is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.

Solomon was the king of Israel famous for his wisdom.

1 Kings 4:32 – 34:

He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. He spoke about plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also spoke about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. From all nations people came to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.

Three authors are named in Proverbs (Solomon, Agur and Lemuel), others are mentioned collectively as ‘Wise Men’, and at least one section of the book (the last) is anonymous.

The Topic of Fools in Scripture

We need to be wise in addressing this topic, we need to be compassionate toward people we identify as fools or who behave foolishly, and we need to base this on what the Bible tells us.

In her book, *Fool-proofing Your Life*, Jan Silvius suggests that you write out a prayer of gratitude and faith, affirming your willingness to consider what God has to teach you about your difficult relationship, yourself, and his wisdom. Put that prayer somewhere that you will remember to pray it daily. (P. 22). That is a very good suggestion.

The Simple, the Mocker and the Fool

In this passage we see three different types of people who would be considered fools:

Proverbs 1:22 – 27:

“How long will you who are simple love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge? Repent at my rebuke! Then I will pour out my thoughts to you, I will make known to you my teachings. But since you refuse to listen when I call and no one pays attention when I stretch out my hand, since you disregard all my advice and do not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh when disaster strikes you; I will mock when calamity overtakes you— when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you.

Here as in many places in Proverbs, Wisdom is personified. She speaks.

- To the simple—those who are untrained in the ways of wisdom. “How long?” she asks. How many more weeks, months or years will you who are simple reject or neglect wisdom’s help?
- To the mockers—they delight in mockery. Wisdom again asks, “How long?”
- To the fools—hate knowledge. They lack spiritual desire to seek and find God’s wisdom.

“While the simple one has a blank look on his face, the mocker wears a sneer.” (Wiersbe)

From this passage in Proverbs 1, what is likely to happen to the simple, the mocker and the fool who reject wisdom?

The “Simple”

This is a person who continually behaves in very foolish ways, makes the same mistakes over and over, and even when that person seems to listen to advice, they never change their ways. They are “without insight.” They are naïve and gullible, easily led astray, and weak, yet they seldom if ever recognize their foolishness.

Jan says, “Naïve, simple people can be wise in some areas, even quite successful, but emotionally and spiritually they are dispossessed.” (which means “deprived.”)

From Proverbs, here are some characteristics of the simple—some “red flags” to look for:

Proverbs 1:32: For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them.

Proverbs 9:13: Folly is an unruly woman; she is simple and knows nothing.

Proverbs 14:15: The simple believe anything, but the prudent give thought to their steps.

Proverbs 22:3: The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.

What do we learn here about this simple “naïve” person?

But there is hope for the simple:

Proverbs 21:11: When a mocker is punished, the simple gain wisdom; by paying attention to the wise they get knowledge.

Proverbs 8:5: You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, set your hearts on it.

Proverbs 19:25: Flog a mocker, and the simple will learn prudence; rebuke the discerning, and they will gain knowledge.

There is hope:

- When they realize that their foolishness brings punishment, they can improve.
- When they pay attention to wise people, they can gain wisdom

And they are admonished to be prudent. A prudent person shows care for the future; they think beyond the instant gratification of the moment.

So, if there is a simple fool in your life, be encouraged that perhaps they will listen to you or to someone, or perhaps they will learn from their failures.

Psalm 19:7: The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

Psalm 119:130: The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

What are some appropriate ways to respond to this simple naïve fool?

The Mocker (Scoffer)

Mockers (also called “scoffers” in Scripture) defy and renounce truth and good things, not only to their own detriment and destruction, but that of others. They provoke others to wrong, strife, and evil. The mocker delights in bringing harm.

Proverbs 21:24: The proud and arrogant person—“Mocker” is his name—behaves with insolent fury.

Insolent means having a rude and arrogant lack of respect.

Psalm 1:1: Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers...

Proverbs 9:7-8: Whoever corrects a mocker invites insults; whoever rebukes the wicked incurs abuse. Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you; rebuke the wise and they will love you.

Proverbs 13:1: A wise son heeds his father’s instruction, but a mocker does not respond to rebukes.

Proverbs 15:12: Mockers resent correction, so they avoid the wise.

Proverbs 22:10: Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended.

Proverbs 24:9: The schemes of folly are sin, and people detest a mocker.

Isaiah 29:20: The ruthless will vanish, the mockers will disappear, and all who have an eye for evil will be cut down—

Psalm 74:22: Rise up, O God, and defend your cause; remember how fools mock you all day long.

The mocker is very difficult. From these passages what do you learn about them and how you should respond to them?

How long should you endure their behavior? How much harm could it do you personally to continue to endure their behavior for long periods of time? Even if they will not heed your correction, should you still make it clear that their behavior is not acceptable?

One of the reasons we know Christ is coming soon is by the huge increase in scoffers and mockers. Consider the mockery that is going on in America, and I’m sure other countries too.

One recent example:

Excerpts from Breakpoint Daily 4/11/22 - colsoncenter@colsoncenter.org

A little over a week ago, the White House issued a series of documents for the “International Transgender Day of Visibility.” Even more than revealing a new progressive “baseline” when it comes to politics and gender, these documents foreshadow new and real threats to religious freedom.

For example, a statement from the Office of Population Affairs claimed that so-called gender-affirming treatment “improves the mental health and overall well-being of gender-diverse children and adolescents.” In this case, however, gender “affirming” means to encourage grade-school children to *question* their gender and, once they do, provide them with puberty blockers and hormone therapy to help them reject their bodies. In some cases, the document says, adolescents should even have access to so-called “gender-affirming surgery,” a procedure which removes or destroys perfectly healthy body parts and is irreversible.

Years ago, Chuck Colson began to notice how then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and other officials began to use the language of “freedom to worship” instead of “freedom of religion.” As he said at the time, freedom to worship is a narrowing of religious freedom, away from public expression toward only private conviction. It

is a major loss if religious freedom no longer includes the right to order one's life around deeply held religious beliefs, but only protects the right to believe in one's own heart, head, home, and house of worship.

2 Peter 3:3 – 7:

Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

Notice that scoffers follow their own evil desires—their own lusts. They will scoff at the second coming of Jesus. They forget God's creation and the judgment God poured out on the earth in the days of Noah.

How important is it that we today believe literally in creation, in what happened in the Garden of Eden, and in Noah's Flood?

The Fool

The fool hates knowledge. If a person does not want to be knowledgeable, what is bound to happen to them? What would cause a person to "hate knowledge" and what would that look like in the way they behave?

Proverbs 10:8: The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin.

Proverbs 10:14: The wise store up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool invites ruin.

Proverbs 10:18: Whoever conceals hatred with lying lips and spreads slander is a fool.

Proverbs 10:23: A fool finds pleasure in wicked schemes, but a person of understanding delights in wisdom.

Proverbs 12:15: The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.

Proverbs 14:16: The wise fear the LORD and shun evil, but a fool is hotheaded and yet feels secure.

Proverbs 15:5: A fool spurns a parent's discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.

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

What are characteristics of a fool in these passages?

Because God has infinite wisdom, the person who neglects God will naturally miss out on wisdom—he will become a fool.

Proverbs 28:26: Those who trust in themselves are fools, but those who walk in wisdom are kept safe.

The Consequences of Rejecting Wisdom

Proverbs 1:28 – 33:

"Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me, since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD. Since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes. For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm."

The simple, the mocker and the fool appear to be fixed types; it is their fault, not their fate.

What could contribute to a person becoming a simpleton, a mocker and/or a fool?

- Their childhood – neglect or abuse

- Their poor role models
- Their rejection of God and Jesus
- Lack of knowledge
- Lack of analytical capabilities (for example, assessing risks)
- Lack of social-emotional intelligence
- Mindlessness
- Prior learning (that is, previous experience of undertaking similar stupid actions without negative consequences)
- Irrationality
- Personality
- Totally selfish/self-involved

Any of these can be overcome by God's grace—IF the foolish person would ever see their need for Jesus and his redemption.

Symptoms of a Person Entangled with a Fool

(from Jan's book, page 7)

- You can't figure out why this relationship just can't work.
- You fear losing what you think you have with this person, whatever that might be (you may not be able to define it!).
- You feel guilty for failing to find a solution to the ongoing pain.
- You are afraid to face the truth and possible consequences. The unknown is very threatening to you.
- You know you have to do something to change the destructive dynamics, but you don't know what you need to do.

Romans 12:18: If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Peace with everyone is the goal for us as believers, but it is not always possible. God doesn't want you to live under the control of a fool and allow them to bring harm to yourself and to others.

The benefits of wisdom are wonderful, and God will give you the wisdom you need to respond to any fool or foolish behavior from people in your life.

Proverbs 2:6: For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

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."