



Dealing with Foolish People



Lesson Four

April 26, 2022

**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
all who follow his precepts have good understanding.
To him belongs eternal praise.
Psalm 111:10**

Introduction

We all acknowledge that foolishness/folly is sin but be aware that sin is foolishness. Whenever we choose to sin, we are choosing to play the part of the fool.

Satan, of course, is the prince of fools.

Isaiah 14:12 – 15:

How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit.

Notice how his characteristics are clearly those of a fool:

- He actively seeks to lead others in his evil ways.
- He tries to bring destruction wherever he can.
- He is the ultimate deceiver.
- He is the best liar ever.
- He is arrogant and proud.
- He is a troublemaker and a nuisance.

1 Peter 5:8:

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

We should avoid him as the No. 1 Fool.

Examples of fools in the Bible

Matthew 23:16-19:

Woe to you, blind guides! You say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.' You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? You also say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar is bound by that oath.' You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred?



What foolish behavior does this passage refer to?

Jeremiah 10:8:

They (people who worship idols) are all senseless and foolish; they are taught by worthless wooden idols.

Job 2:9 – 10:

His wife said to him, “Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!”

He replied, “You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?”

In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

Can Christians Be Fools?

It is possible for a Christian to play the fool, whenever we stray from the path of wisdom into the path of folly and sin.

Ephesians 4:22 – 32:

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

What are we to put off? Are these not characteristics of a fool?

Christians are told not to fellowship with professing Christians who are living in sin:

1 Corinthians 5:9 – 13:

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked person from among you.”

Titus 3:10 – 11:

Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned.

Our old nature is predisposed toward practicing folly. Those of us who are Christians need to look for the fool in us, not just in others.

Matthew 16:24:

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Galatians 5:24: Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Biblical Principles for Dealing with Foolish People

Principle #1 – Don't try to change them or give them advice.

Proverbs 23:9 (NLT): Don't waste your breath on fools, for they will despise the wisest advice.

Principle #2 – Don't give them honor or luxury.

Proverbs 19:10a: It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury.

Proverbs 26:1: Like snow in summer or rain in harvest, honor is not fitting for a fool.

Foolish people generally have no regard for taking care of possessions. To give them undeserved honor of any kind is neither smart nor helpful. To give them places of honor is to invite trouble.

Principle #3 – Don't argue with foolish people.

2 Timothy 2:23-24:

Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome. . .

Proverbs 29:8-9:

Mockers stir up a city, but the wise turn away anger. If a wise person goes to court with a fool, the fool rages and scoffs, and there is no peace.

Proverbs 26:4-5 (NASB):

Do not answer a fool according to his foolishness, or you will also be like him. Answer a fool as his foolishness *deserves*, so that he will not be wise in his own eyes.

Verse 4 warns against arguing with a fool on his own terms, lest we stoop to his level and become as foolish as he is. Verse 5, on the other hand, tells us that there are times when a fool has to be addressed so that his foolishness will not go unchallenged.

Proverbs 20:3 "It is to one's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel."

Principle #4 – Protect yourself from the resentment and anger caused by foolish people.

Proverbs 27:3 (NLT):

A stone is heavy and sand is weighty, but the resentment caused by a fool is heavier than both.

It is your responsibility to protect yourself from their words, their actions, their accusations, their behavior.

What are some ways you can protect yourself against foolish people?

Principle #5 – Don't trust a fool.

Proverbs 26:6-7:

Sending a message by the hands of a fool is like cutting off one's feet or drinking poison. Like the useless legs of one who is lame is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.

Luke 6:39 (NLT):

Then Jesus gave the following illustration: "Can one blind person lead another? Won't they both fall into a ditch?"

Principle #6 – Don't willingly associate with or form a partnership with a fool.

Proverbs 14:7: Stay away from a fool, for you will not find knowledge on their lips.

Why is it wise not to associate with a fool any more than necessary?

Proverbs 17:12: Better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than a fool bent on folly.

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

How does that work if the mocker is your child, or your mate, or your parent, or a co-worker? Can you “drive them out”?

How and when should you literally “drive out” a fool?

While wisdom is not contagious to a fool, folly is to the wise.

Principle #7 – Don’t hire a fool.

Proverbs 26:10: Like an archer who wounds at random is one who hires a fool or any passer-by.

What happens when an archer “wounds at random”?

How can you recognize a fool during a job interview?

Proverbs 26:6: Sending a message by the hands of a fool is like cutting off one’s feet or drinking poison.

Principle #8 – Parents need to be aware when their children have foolish behavior.

Proverbs 22:15: Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far away.

Parents who refuse to discipline are allowing their children to get by with folly, and that could lead to a life of folly.

What can you do about grown children who are foolish?

Principle #9 – We should not make life easy for a fool.

Proverbs 18:6 – 7:

The lips of fools bring them strife, and their mouths invite a beating. The mouths of fools are their undoing, and their lips are a snare to their very lives.

Conclusion

We must deal with fools differently than other people.

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.

Responding to fools as we have discussed may cause you to feel guilty. That is false guilt.

However, you cannot avoid feeling sad about it, feeling compassion for them even in the midst of your frustration. But if you abandon what the Bible teaches about fools and how to respond to them, you will just prolong the misery.

Remember:

- **The fool hates what is holy, righteous and good.**

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

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

Proverbs 14:9: Fools mock at making amends for sin, but goodwill is found among the upright.

- **The fool does not possess wisdom and has no desire to obtain wisdom.**

Proverbs 10:21: The lips of the righteous nourish many, but fools die for lack of sense.

Proverbs 17:16: Why should fools have money in hand to buy wisdom, when they are not able to understand it?

Proverbs 23:9: Do not speak to fools, for they will scorn your prudent words.

- **The fool is undisciplined.**

Proverbs 12:16: Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult.

Proverbs 29:11: Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise bring calm in the end.

Proverbs 12:23: The prudent keep their knowledge to themselves, but a fool's heart blurts out folly.

Proverbs 15:2: The tongue of the wise adorns knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.

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

- **The fool is unreliable.**

Proverbs 26:10: Like an archer who wounds at random is one who hires a fool or any passer-by.

Proverbs 19:1: Better the poor whose walk is blameless than a fool whose lips are perverse.

- **The fool is unteachable.**

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

Proverbs 17:10: A rebuke impresses a discerning person more than a hundred lashes a fool.

Proverbs 27:22: Though you grind a fool in a mortar, grinding them like grain with a pestle, you will not remove their folly from them.

What Causes a Person to Become a Fool?

When a person chooses to distrust God and instead to trust in his/her own heart, they are on the path to folly.

Proverbs 3:5 – 6:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 1:20 – 29:

Out in the open wisdom calls aloud, she raises her voice in the public square; on top of the wall she cries out, at the city gate she makes her speech: "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. "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.

It says wisdom will laugh when the foolish suffer the consequences of their foolishness. These sentiments are very similar to those found in the prophets:

Isaiah 1:15:

When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood!

Jeremiah 11:11:

Therefore this is what the LORD says: 'I will bring on them a disaster they cannot escape. Although they cry out to me, I will not listen to them.

This would indicate that there is a "statue of limitations" on these important matters. This is also the language of the wisdom literature.

There Is Hope for Fools

Consider the parable of the prodigal son.

Luke 15:11 – 20:

"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So he got up and went to his father.

What caused this son to "come to his senses"?

He had to live with the consequences of his folly. If you have a foolish person in your life and you continually shelter them from the consequences of their folly, you are doing them no favor. The one thing that could perhaps change a fool is when he/she has to live with the consequences of their own sin. It doesn't always work out that way, but it is perhaps the only way they come to their senses and turn to the Lord.