

# Workshop for Weekend Getaway 2023

## Dealing with Foolish People

### with Mary Lowman

The Bible has lots to say about fools and foolish behavior. So, we can see that fools have been with us from the beginning of time. Interestingly, the word *fool* or *fools* is mentioned 99 times in Proverbs alone. And it appears approximately 360 times throughout the Old and New Testament. Sin is the cause of foolish behavior; fools are people who have sinful behavior and never or seldom repent.

#### Teaching about Fools from Proverbs

##### **Proverbs 1:1 – 7**

The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: <sup>2</sup>for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight; <sup>3</sup>for receiving instruction in prudent behavior, doing what is right and just and fair; <sup>4</sup>for giving prudence to those who are simple, knowledge and discretion to the young—<sup>5</sup>let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance—<sup>6</sup>for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise. <sup>7</sup>The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

#### **Who Is a Fool?**

Persons who do not possess wisdom are called “fools.” A fool's behavior is described as “folly,” which is silliness and craziness. Folly is the opposite of wisdom.

A simple definition of a fool is a person who is thoughtless, self-centered, and obviously indifferent to God. There is a big difference between a person seeking wisdom who acts foolishly and a fool who does not really seek wisdom at all.

#### **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;<sup>21</sup> on top of the wall she cries out, at the city gate she makes her speech: <sup>22</sup>“How long will you who are simple love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge? <sup>23</sup>Repent at my rebuke! Then I will pour out my thoughts to you, I will make known to you my teachings.<sup>24</sup> But since you refuse to listen when I call and no one pays attention when I stretch out my hand,<sup>25</sup> since you disregard all my advice and do not accept my rebuke,<sup>26</sup> I in turn will laugh when disaster strikes you; I will mock when calamity overtakes you—<sup>27</sup>when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you. <sup>28</sup>“Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me,<sup>29</sup> since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD.

#### **How Should We Respond to Fools?**

##### **Proverbs 14:7 - 9:**

Stay away from a fool, for you will not find knowledge on their lips. <sup>8</sup>The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception. <sup>9</sup>Fools mock at making amends for sin, but goodwill is found among the upright.

What are we told here about dealing with the fools in our lives—or with people behaving foolishly?

- **Stay away.** What are some ways you can separate yourself from a fool?
- **A fool will not impart any true knowledge to you.** You don't need to listen to their opinions any more than you have to.
- **Fools are often very deceptive.** Sometimes they seem to be harmless but then you realize they are deceiving you.
- **Fools rarely if ever admit they've made a mistake, or that they have sinned.**
- **You won't find much "goodwill" among fools.**

**Proverbs 13:20:** Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.

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

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

Does this mean that we give up on people? Do we just walk away from a foolish person, throw up our hands and say, "That's it! I'm done"?

### **Symptoms of a Relationship with a Fool**

In her book, *Fool-proofing Your Life*, Jan Silvious 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.

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.

Jan Silvious 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

## **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.

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

**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.

**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.

### **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:** He also told them this parable: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit?"

### **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.

**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.

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.

**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.

### **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. <sup>7</sup>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.

**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.

**There Is Hope for Fools**

Consider the parable of the prodigal son. He was as foolish as one could be. He had everything he could ever need or want in his father's house, but he wanted more and he wanted it now. So, he took his inheritance and squandered it in a distant country.

**Luke 15:13 – 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. <sup>14</sup>After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup>So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup>He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup>"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! <sup>18</sup>I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup>I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' <sup>20</sup>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.