

Dealing With Foolish People

Presented by Mary Lowman

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Day One

The Bible clearly describes foolish behavior and warns us about it.

Some people behave foolishly on a sporadic basis; others are consistently foolish. As we talk about foolish people, we need to be aware that we could be talking about ourselves as well. None of us is exempt from any of these foolish characteristics. I spent ten years doing my own thing, walking away from my commitment to Jesus Christ, and I shake my head as I think of how foolishly I behaved in those years.

We will look to God's Word to define foolish behavior for ourselves and look again to tell us what our responsibility is when we deal with that kind of person. Not all foolish people have all these characteristics. You may know foolish people with only one of these traits, but it is so pronounced that it consumes them.

What is foolish behavior?

Denying, disregarding, or rebelling against God

The fool says in his heart "There is no God" (Psalm 14:1).

It is very foolish to ignore the living God. In fact, nothing could be more foolish. And this applies not only to those who are outright atheists or agnostics but also to those who live as though there is no God. If you asked them, many would say, "I believe there is a God." But nothing in their life or lifestyle shows any acknowledgement of God. They live as though God does not exist. The Bible says they are fools.

Slandering, lying, deceiving

He who conceals his hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool (Proverbs 10:18).

Foolish people don't hesitate to lie. They are big on running other people down. Their mouths often get them into trouble.

Just think of the foolish people you know. Isn't their mouth one of their biggest problems? When our mouths are out of control, we, too, are foolish.

Day Two

Is there anyone in your life you consider to be a foolish person? I imagine you can think of someone. It's important for us to recognize foolish behavior and respond to it correctly.

Let's look at how the Bible defines a person who is foolish:

Quick-Tempered

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

It is foolish behavior to lose your temper. A foolish person will say and do all kinds of foolish things because of his/her temper. Their temper is often notorious.

Acts Impetuously and Without Regard for Consequences

Wise people think before they act; fools don't and even brag about it! (Proverbs 13:16).

A wise man fears the Lord and shuns evil, but a fool is hotheaded and reckless (Proverbs 14:16).

Do you know someone who does or says whatever pops into their head, without any regard for how it affects their future, other people, their pocketbook, etc.? Foolish people have little regard for consequences; they live totally for the pleasure of the moment. And they brag about it!

Talks endlessly, brags, spouts off frequently

The wise person makes learning a joy; fools spout only foolishness (Proverbs 15:2 NLT).

A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions (Proverbs 18:2).

Proverbs 10:19 reminds us: *When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.* Jesus warned us that *everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken* (Matthew 12:36).

Foolish people have an opinion on anything and everything. Even though they may have very little knowledge, they always have an opinion. And of course, they are very vocal about their opinion with little regard for anyone else's opinion.

Refuses Advice, Accountability and/or Discipline

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

A fool never accepts advice or correction of any kind. They are unteachable. And they refuse needed disciplines in their lives like being on time, fulfilling their promises, being accountable for their actions, being dependable, following through and following up.

These are not very complimentary descriptions, are they? If you have some foolish people in your life, ask God to help you respond appropriately.

Day Three

The Bible has a lot to say about foolish behavior.

For example, they handle money recklessly, they quarrel frequently and pick fights, they tend to be lazy and lack focus and ambition. And sadly, they never seem to learn from past experiences. Proverbs 27:22 says, *Though you grind a fool in a mortar, grinding them like grain with a pestle, you will not remove their folly from them.*

With all the trouble they bring on themselves, fools still never seem to learn. No matter how bad the consequences of their behavior are, they repeat the same things again.

The Bible also tells us about the consequences and effects of foolish behavior on other people. A foolish person brings trouble on his family (Proverbs 11:29), and parents of a foolish child are in for heartache. Proverbs 10:1 says: *A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son grief to his mother.*

Also, a foolish person on the job can wreak havoc. Proverbs 26:10 says: *Like an archer who wounds at random is he who hires a fool or any passer-by.*

Foolish people cause problems and present unique challenges. Whether you work with or for someone who behaves foolishly or have a family member or friend who fits that description, they can cause you many hours of pain, confusion, anger, and frustration.

I urge you to think of the people in your life who demonstrate some of these foolish characteristics, perhaps write their names down, and begin to pray for them. Remember, no one is in your life by accident, and God has a purpose for allowing them in your life. Your challenge is to see the big picture from God's eyes and know how to respond in a godly way.

Day Four

The important issue we must consider is how we should respond to these foolish people. Our normal response is anger and frustration. But what does God want us to do? Let's see what the Bible says.

How are we to respond to foolish behavior?

1. Pray for them. God can change anybody. Don't ever give up. You can't change them, but you can pray for God to change them.
2. Keep the right attitude and motivation toward foolish people. It's easy to become judgmental and arrogant toward them. Remember, God loves them as much as he loves you.
3. Be prepared to set boundaries and protect yourself from being harmed by foolish people.

Now, here are some Scriptures that give us further guidance on how God wants us to respond to the foolish people in our lives.

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

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

You may present the most logical, clear, helpful presentation of the right thing they should do, but they will not have ears to hear. If you keep trying to offer your advice, to persuade them with words, you will be continually frustrated.

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

Proverbs 19:10: *It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury – how much worse for a slave to rule over princes!*

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

Foolish people are easily spoiled and generally have no regard for taking care of possessions. They can ruin a car, a home, and clothes with no shame or concern. Giving them things will not solve their problems, though they want to get anything they can. They will ask for and expect gifts.

To give them undeserved honor of any kind is neither smart nor helpful. To give them places of honor is to invite trouble. They don't know how to handle honor or responsibility.

Day Five

The Bible not only describes foolish behavior for us, but it also gives clear guidance on how we should respond to foolish people.

Here's another principle for dealing with foolish people:

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 quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.*

You will be tempted to argue with a foolish person. All your emotions will lead you in that direction. They bring out the worst in us, so you need to pray for patience and self-control. If you allow them to drag you into an argument, they have brought you down to their level, and you will never win that argument. You will just end up in great frustration. Someone has said: "Never tell a fool that he is a fool. All you'll have is an angry fool."

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.*

In her book, *Foolproofing Your Life*, my friend, Jan Silvius gives good advice about setting boundaries for the foolish people in your life. She says to think of living in a castle, with a moat around it and a drawbridge over that moat. When you see that foolish person coming at you, think of pulling up that drawbridge. It may be a mental or emotional drawbridge, or actually putting some space between you and that person, but learn to set those boundaries.¹

Yes, you have responsibilities toward some foolish people. Yes, you must interact with some foolish people. Yes, you can't avoid all foolish people. But it is your responsibility to protect yourself from their words, their actions, their accusations, and their behavior. As Jan puts it, if you have to feed them, use a long-handle spoon.

Well, there is a lot we can learn from Scripture on how to deal with foolish people.

¹ Jan Silvius, *Foolproofing Your Life: Wisdom for Untangling Your Most Difficult Relationships* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 1998).