

Get Smart: A Study in Proverbs

Study #7 Fool Proof

A common character in the book of Proverbs is the fool. The fool is the negative example, the model of what not to do. Although the word “fool” in English can sometimes be applied to the humorous buffoon or clown, this is not what is meant in Proverbs. Neither should we read this as a simpleton. Rather the fool is one who does not pursue wisdom, one who is consumed with self and one morally deficient. Sometimes foolishness is the result of immaturity and lack of experience, but some fools are stuck in their ways.

Fools will not Take Instruction

A foundational feature of fools is that they are unwilling to listen to wisdom. They are self focused and self confident and when corrected are more likely to lash out than to reflect on the advice.

- Proverbs 10:8 *The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin.*
- Proverbs 10:14 *Wise men store up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool invites ruin.*
- Proverbs 12:15 *The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.*
- Proverbs 15:5 *A fool spurns his father’s discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.*
- Proverbs 15:14 *The discerning heart seeks knowledge, but the mouth of a fool feeds on folly.*
- Proverbs 17:10 *A rebuke impresses a man of discernment more than a hundred lashes a fool.*
- Proverbs 17:16 *Of what use is money in the hand of a fool, since he has no desire to get wisdom?*
- Proverbs 18:2 *A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.*
- Proverbs 26:11 *As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.*

- Proverbs 26:9 *Like a thorn bush in a drunkard's hand is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.*
- Proverbs 26:12 *Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*
- Proverbs 27:22 *Though you grind a fool in a mortar, grinding him like grain with a pestle, you will not remove his folly from him.*
- Proverbs 28:26 *He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe.*

Foolish is as Foolish says and does

Fools are recognized by bad living. They say and do the wrong things. Fools expose themselves by their behavior.

- Proverbs 10:18 *He who conceals his hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool.*
- Proverbs 10:23 *A fool finds pleasure in evil conduct, but a man of understanding delights in wisdom.*
- Proverbs 12:16 *A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult.*
- Proverbs 13:16 *Every prudent man acts out of knowledge, but a fool exposes his folly.*
- Proverbs 14:16 *A wise man fears the LORD and shuns evil, but a fool is hotheaded and reckless.*
- Proverbs 15:2 *The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.*
- Proverbs 20:3 *It is to a man's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.*
- Proverbs 29:11 *A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.*

Dealing with fools

The problem with fools is that they come in many varieties. Sometimes it is worth attempting to correct them, but often the safest policy is to leave them be.

- Proverbs 17:12 *Better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than a fool in his folly.*
- Proverbs 17:21 *To have a fool for a son brings grief; there is no joy for the father of a fool.*
- Proverbs 23:9 *Do not speak to a fool, for he will scorn the wisdom of your words.*
- Proverbs 26:4 *Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself.*
- Proverbs 26:5 *Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.*
- Proverbs 26:6 *Like cutting off one's feet or drinking violence is the sending of a message by the hand of a fool.*
- Proverbs 26:10 *Like an archer who wounds at random is he who hires a fool or any passer-by.*
- Proverbs 29:9 *If a wise man goes to court with a fool, the fool rages and scoffs, and there is no peace.*