

# A Study of Fools

The Bible has a lot to say about both wisdom and foolishness. A lot of time has been spent studying wisdom, but I haven't seen a lot written on what the Bible has to say about fools. While it's a good thing to know what activities are wise, it's also good to know what things are foolish and should be avoided! If we don't know the characteristics of fools then we may find ourselves becoming one without realizing it. The Bible strongly warns against foolishness and we should take its warnings seriously.

The word “fool” appears a *lot* in the Bible. There's no shortage of material! The picture that the Bible gives us of fools is fascinating. One of the key themes of Proverbs is that fools should forsake their foolishness and get wisdom:

**Proverbs 1:20-22:** “Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?”

There are many people in the world – and even in churches – who don't value wisdom. In our day the truth isn't prized. Many people prefer fantasy over reality and would rather believe things that make them happy instead of things that are true. This is a serious error that has deadly consequences:

**Proverbs 1:24-32:** “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also

will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them."

Do *not* choose foolishness! Instead choose wisdom. Don't hate knowledge and don't despise the fear of the Lord. Run to Him while there's still time. Reject foolishness with great passion and fervency! Don't demonstrate the characteristics of fools.

## ***Fools Deny God***

Anyone who denies the existence of God is a fool:

**Psalm 14:1:** "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good."

**Psalm 53:1:** "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good."

As the old saying goes, God doesn't believe in atheists.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of both wisdom and understanding:

**Proverbs 9:10:** “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”

Those who don't fear the Lord lack wisdom. They are blind, walking in darkness.

### ***Fools Hate Wisdom***

Anyone who despises wisdom and instruction is a fool:

**Proverbs 1:7:** “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

**Proverbs 1:22:** “How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scornors delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?”

**Proverbs 15:5:** “A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.”

**Proverbs 17:24:** “Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.”

This next one is especially biting. All those who are seeking to “discover themselves” and “follow their heart” are fools:

**Proverbs 18:2:** “A fool hath no delight in

understanding, but that his heart may discover itself."

The Bible is brutally honest about this. Those who trust their hearts are fools:

**Proverbs 28:26:** "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered."

Why is it such an error to trust your heart? The book of Jeremiah explains:

**Jeremiah 17:9:** "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Don't trust your heart! Instead trust God and His Word. Why would you trust something that's deceitful and desperately wicked?

Another key characteristics of a fool is his utter hatred of wisdom:

**Proverbs 23:9:** "Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words."

**Proverbs 29:9:** "If a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest."

A wise man can be corrected by a simple reproof. If you point out the error of his ways then he'll repent and change. However, there are some people who hate reproof and refuse to be corrected. Those people are so committed to error that even beatings won't deter them! They are fools:

**Proverbs 17:10:** “A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.”

**Proverbs 27:22:** “Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.”

People who hate wisdom and love error should be avoided:

**Proverbs 14:7:** “Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.”

Why is it wise to avoid such people? Because fools are dangerous:

**Proverbs 17:12:** “Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.”

It's actually better to meet *an angry bear* than it is to meet a fool in his folly!

Then there are these two enigmatic verses:

**Proverbs 26:4:** “Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.”

**Proverbs 26:5:** “Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.”

These verses seem contradictory, but I suspect they're talking about two different situations. In the first case, answering a fool would make you like him so you shouldn't answer him. In the second case, you *should* answer him lest he be wise in his own conceit.

How can you tell the difference between the two situations? With wisdom. There's a time for everything: a time to rebuke fools and a time to *not* rebuke fools. The difficult part is learning to not confuse those two situations.

## ***Fools Are Characterized By Anger***

Those who are quick to wrath, and easily angered, are fools:

**Proverbs 12:16:** “A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent man covereth shame.”

**Proverbs 14:17:** “He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.”

**Proverbs 27:3:** “A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both.”

**Ecclesiastes 7:9:** “Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.”

Those who are characterized by a spirit of anger are fools. The wise take a different approach:

**James 1:19-20:** “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

## ***Fools Are Destroyed By Their Anger***

It's a foolish thing to be quick to wrath. That road leads to

destruction and even death:

**Job 5:2:** “For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one.”

### ***Fools Are Destroyed By Prosperity***

It's a terrible thing for a foolish person to suddenly become prosperous. Prosperity will utterly ruin those who aren't wise:

**Proverbs 1:32:** “For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.”

This has been proven true time and time again by lottery winners. You might think that winning the lottery would make the rest of your life a dream, but in some cases that's not what happens. Instead those who win the lottery sometimes find that the sudden influx of millions of dollars has utterly ruined their lives:

“Adams, who won the New Jersey lottery in 1985 and 1986 for a total of \$5.4 million, gambled and gave away all her winnings and by 2001 was poor and living in a trailer...Michael Carroll, who won about \$17 million in a lottery in England in 2003, said he only had \$3 million left in early 2006. He told the press, “I regret ever winning the lottery. I’ve spent \$2 million on drugs and given \$7 million to friends and family.” Karen Cohen, who won \$1 million in the Illinois state lottery in 1984, filed for bankruptcy in 2000 and in 2006 was sentenced to 22 months in jail for lying to federal

bankruptcy court. Jeffrey Dampier, who won \$20 million, was kidnapped and murdered by his own sister-in-law and his boyfriend who targeted him for money. Ed Gildein, who won \$8.8 million in the Texas lottery in 1993, gambled away most of the money and left his wife with a slew of debts when he died in 2003.”

(David Cloud, *Lottery Fever*)<sup>1</sup>

## ***Fools Love Evil***

Those who love evil, or love doing evil things, or mock the idea of “sin”, are fools:

**Proverbs 10:23:** “It is as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom.”

**Proverbs 13:19:** “The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil.”

**Proverbs 14:9:** “Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.”

**Proverbs 14:16:** “A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.”

**Proverbs 19:3:** “The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the Lord.”

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1 Source: [https://www.wayoflife.org/reports/lottery\\_fever.html](https://www.wayoflife.org/reports/lottery_fever.html)



**Proverbs 24:9:** "The thought of foolishness is sin: and the scorner is an abomination to men."

The wise man fears God and departs from evil, but to a fool it is an *abomination* to depart from evil.

## ***Fools Face Judgment***

The foolishness of fools doesn't go unpunished. There are consequences for despising wisdom and clinging to folly:

**Psalm 5:5:** "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity."

**Psalm 107:17:** "Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted."

**Proverbs 3:35:** "The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools."

**Proverbs 10:8:** "The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall."

**Proverbs 10:14:** "Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction."

**Proverbs 10:21:** "The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom."

**Proverbs 13:20:** "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

**Proverbs 18:6:** "A fool's lips enter into

contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.”

**Proverbs 19:29:** “Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools.”

**Proverbs 26:3:** “A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back.”

**Proverbs 26:10:** “The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.”

The wise will inherit glory, but the fool will inherit shame, suffering, and death.

## ***Fools Lie About Their Hatred***

This one is a bit odd. Those who hide their hatred with lies are fools:

**Proverbs 10:18:** “He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool.”

Does this mean it's better to be open about your hatred? Not exactly. As the verse goes on to explain, those who are open about their hatred and slander others are *also* fools. It's best to not hate your brother in the first place! After all, God has commanded us to love one another (John 13:34-35).

We should keep this in mind, though:

**Proverbs 27:5:** “Open rebuke is better than secret love.”

This verse seems odd but it makes perfect sense. If a

fellow Christian is sinning and you openly rebuke him so that he turns from his sin and is saved from it, then you've done him a great service. However, if you do nothing about it then he's actually worse off than if you'd rebuked him! A secret love that results in no actions is pretty much worthless.

## ***Fools Will Serve The Wise***

It should come as no surprise that those who are foolish, and despise knowledge, will find themselves serving those who are wise:

**Proverbs 11:29:** “He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool shall be servant to the wise of heart.”

## ***Fools Think Their Ways Are Right***

One of the key characteristics of fools is that they do what *they* think is right:

**Proverbs 12:15:** “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.”

The wise man takes a very different course: he does what *God* thinks is right. A fool says “I think this action is right, so I will do it.” A wise man reads the counsel of God and obeys it. The Bible repeatedly warns us against doing what's right in our own eyes! That road leads to destruction.

## ***Fools Proclaim Foolishness***

Those who are constantly saying foolish things are fools:

**Proverbs 12:23:** “A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.”

**Proverbs 13:16:** “Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open his folly.”

**Proverbs 14:3:** “In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.”

**Proverbs 14:33:** “Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: but that which is in the midst of fools is made known.”

**Proverbs 15:2:** “The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.”

**Proverbs 15:7:** “The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doeth not so.”

**Proverbs 15:14:** “The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.”

**Proverbs 16:22:** “Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly.”

**Proverbs 18:7:** “A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.”

**Proverbs 19:1:** “Better is the poor that walketh

in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool."

Wise men are easy to spot because they're the people who are saying wise things. All you have to do to spot a fool is listen to what he has to say.

## ***Fools Cause Sorrow***

A foolish child brings misery and pain to his parents:

**Proverbs 17:21:** "He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy."

**Proverbs 17:25:** "A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him."

**Proverbs 19:13:** "A foolish son is the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping."

**Proverbs 15:20:** "A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother."

A wise son makes his father glad. A foolish son brings his father a great deal of pain and suffering.

## ***Fools Stir Up Trouble***

The wise man seeks to put an end to strife. Those who seek to meddle and continue the argument are fools:

**Proverbs 20:3:** "It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be

meddling."

## ***Fools Cannot Handle Wisdom***

When a foolish person somehow gets their hands on a bit of wisdom, the results aren't pretty:

**Proverbs 17:16:** "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?"

**Proverbs 24:7:** "Wisdom is too high for a fool: he openeth not his mouth in the gate."

**Proverbs 26:7:** "The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable in the mouth of fools."

**Proverbs 26:9:** "As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouths of fools."

You might think that if you gave a foolish person a bit of wisdom then he would become wise, but that's not the case. A foolish person can't handle wisdom anymore than a raving drunkard can drive a car. If you try it someone will get hurt. Wisdom can only help the fool after he's stopped being foolish. He has to change first.

What's the beginning of wisdom? The fear of the Lord. *That's* where the journey begins! The fear of the Lord is the first step. People must take that step before anything else can be done.

## ***Fools Cannot Handle Money***

Those who know how to save money and store up wealth are wise. Those who waste it, however, are fools:

**Proverbs 21:20:** “There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.”

### ***Fools Do Not Deserve Honor***

Those who lead foolish lives do not deserve delight or honor:

**Proverbs 19:10:** “Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes.”

**Proverbs 26:1:** “As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool.”

**Proverbs 26:8:** “As he that bindeth a stone in a sling, so is he that giveth honour to a fool.”

### ***Fools Cannot Be Trusted***

If you put your trust in a fool then you'll find yourself in a lot of trouble:

**Proverbs 26:6:** “He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage.”

### ***Fools Return To Their Folly***

Those who return to their foolish ways are fools:

**Proverbs 14:24:** “The crown of the wise is their

riches: but the foolishness of fools is folly."

**Proverbs 26:11:** "As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly."

## ***Fools Speak Hastily***

Those who speak hastily are fools:

**Proverbs 17:7:** "Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince."

**Proverbs 17:28:** "Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding."

**Proverbs 29:11:** "A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards."

**Proverbs 29:20:** "Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him."

**Ecclesiastes 5:3:** "For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words."

**Ecclesiastes 10:12:** "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself."

A person may seem wise if he keeps silent, but once a fool starts talking he's easy to spot. His foolish words give him away.



## ***In Conclusion***

Seek wisdom, not foolishness! The consequences of foolishness are devastating, and the rewards of wisdom are enormous:

**Proverbs 3:13-24:** “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her. The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew. My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion: So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.”