
FROM ABOVE | The Guardrail of Wisdom

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More than half of verses in the book of Proverbs are warnings — alerting us to danger, to things that will destroy our lives, corrupt us, bring us to ruin. The continual invitation is to come back to wisdom, to apprehend wisdom, to live with wisdom, to operate with wisdom. As we're walking on the path of life, wisdom is a guardrail. There is a certain kind of protection, a guarding that comes with wisdom — wisdom is a protector.

If wisdom is a protector — what is wisdom protecting us from?

FOOLISHNESS

Wisdom guards us from foolishness.

One of the best ways to see what Wisdom **is**, is to see what Wisdom **isn't** — and what wisdom guards us **from**.

**FALLACY OF FOOLS
FACTIONS OF FOOLS
FREEDOM FROM FOOLISHNESS**

FALLACY OF FOOLS

On week one, we looked at a definition of wisdom as *...becoming competent with regard to the realities of life*.

Wisdom is having a firm grasp of reality — understanding how things really are in life, how life really works, and knowing how to navigate it. If that's true — then **Foolishness is essentially being out of touch with reality** — there is a denial of the way things really are, the way life really works.

When the Bible talks about foolishness — it's not talking about a lack of education, or knowledge. There are very intelligent people who are foolish when it comes to handling and navigating everyday life. And there are people that never advanced in their education, but yet are very wise.

When the Bible is talking about the fool — it's talking about the person who is out of touch with two specific realities.

REALITY #1 – the fact that the world was created with a specific order and purpose to it. There is physical, moral, spiritual, relational fabric that has been hardwired into the world.

Proverbs 8:22, 29-30

“The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. ²⁹ when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, ³⁰ then I was beside him, like a master workman,

- Physical realities — if you touch fire, you'll get burned.
- Relational realities — if you put your desires ahead of everyone else's, you'll erode trust in your relationships.
- Spiritual and moral realities — if you continually live in sin, you'll bring destruction into your life and into the lives of those around you.

Fools are out of touch with the reality that this is the way the world is — it's the way it was built. Stepping outside of (violating) the boundaries that God has designed us to live within, will reap its own consequence.

PERSONAL: 19-year-old pre-Jesus me, looked at two incredibly loving, gracious, and generous people in my life who had given me a job I didn't deserve, and place to live... I said, *"I'm 19 years old, I'm going to live however I want."* And dear, sweet, loving, Stacy Spencer looked at me and said, *"You're right Rob, you are going to live however you want... but you're not going to do it in my house."*

- And suddenly I began to wrestle with reality number 1.
- There was a moral, and relational fabric to the world that I was not in submission to.

If you're not in submission to this reality — you're a relativist. *You believe that you should be able to define your own reality, to do whatever you want, live however you want, treat others however you want, that your truth is your truth, and that anyone who tells you otherwise is being a judgmental bigot. You're a relativist.*

Scripture calls you a fool because you're in complete denial that there are non-negotiable principles and realities built into the world — it doesn't really matter how you feel about it.

Proverbs 16:25

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

- *"I'm going to determine how I want to live, I'm going to determine right from wrong, no one is going to tell me how to live my life..."* Proverbs is telling you that you're on your way to death itself.

Proverbs 14:6

...a fool is reckless and careless.

- no acknowledgement of the reality of action and reaction, decision & consequence.
- recklessness that brings destruction not only into your own life, but into the lives around you

A fool refuses to acknowledge and submit to the reality that there is a God who created all that we know, see, and experience — and that there is an order to life.

REALITY #2 — The world we live in is fallen, broken because of sin, and therefore — EVEN IF you acknowledge and live by the physical, moral, spiritual, and relational realities of life, and do all the right things, all the right ways — **tragedy, hardship, difficulty, pain, suffering, can still break into your life anyway.**

- this kind of fool believes that if they're submitted to reality number 1, they'll be protected from reality #2
 - this kind of fool thinks, "If I'm **moral** enough, if I'm good enough... THEN I'll be protected from the brokenness that exists in the world... I'll be protected from suffering and hardship... nothing bad will happen to me!"
 - if you're this type of fool — one of two things will happen in your life...
 - you'll begin to look down on people that aren't as "moral" as you are, which violates moral, spiritual and relational principles... and means you're not as moral as you think you are...
 - OR when tragedy does hit your life, you won't be able to handle it. It will destroy you... You'll be thrown in a whirlwind of not just grief... but bewilderment and confusion on top of the grief. You'll think, "How could this be happening to me!? I'm a good person!" You'll feel betrayed, abandoned... *when in reality you were neither betrayed nor abandoned... you just live in a broken world.*

Whether you're a relativist or a moralist... you're a fool.

If you're a **relativist** who says, "We're here by chance, there is no God, and therefore I can live however I want, I can create my own truth, I can determine what's right or wrong for me," you're a fool.

Or if you're a **moralist**, and you're unwilling to admit that the world is fallen, and broken, and that YOU are fallen and broken — no matter how hard you try to do the right things, life can still blow up in your face.

And this is the very thing that WISDOM protects us from —

Wisdom guards us from the **foolishness of relativism** — I can do my own thing, even at other people's expense...

And it guards us from the **foolishness of moralism** — that if I live right, all will go right.

But there are other types of foolishness and destruction that Wisdom guards us from.

FACTIONS OF FOOLS

There are 5 types of fools that are described in the book of Proverbs — see which type(s) may apply to you.

1. THE SIMPLE FOOL

Proverbs 14:15

The **simple believes everything**, but the prudent gives thought to his steps.

The simple fool believes everything — just because it's on the internet means it must be true. They're incredibly naïve, easily influenced, and led down wayward paths. There are educated people that are simple fools — no discernment, no prudence or caution, can't discern between good and bad ideas, good or bad companions, good or bad leaders. They give too much credence to things and people. They love the spectacular, the dramatic — not moved by compelling logic or reason, moved by emotion alone.

We need to be careful of this in the political season we're in right now — there's enough vitriol, division, drama, and emotion connected with issues that need WISDOM — and WISDOM is prudent. It's cautious. It's not swayed by mere emotion. The prudent gives thought to His steps, but the simple believes everything.

2. THE STUBBORN FOOL

Proverbs 15:5

A **fool despises his father's instruction**, but whoever heeds reproof is prudent.

Inflexible, Obstinate, Proud

A stubborn fool is one who won't ever receive correction or instruction. He already knows everything... and the thought that he doesn't already know something is just radically offensive.

Any correction, any criticism that comes his way, he just ignores it.

The simple fool believes everything and is crushed by correction, the stubborn fool believes nothing and just ignores correction.

There is only ONE way to do things, and that's his way (the right way).

PERSONAL: "I already know that."

Stubborn fools are inflexible. They are so rigid, so set, they won't even consider the possibility that there is another way to do something, or another idea that might be better than theirs.

3. THE SCORNING FOOL

Proverbs 21:24

“Scoffer” is the name of the arrogant, haughty man who acts with arrogant pride.

The **scorning fool** is *haughty, over-confident, boastful*, proud, full of themselves, a bragger. They’re savvy, sophisticated, they have a power about them.

The **simple** fool is crushed by instruction and correction. The **stubborn** fool ignores instruction and correction. The **scornful**... the **mockers** lash out at you, they slander you as retaliation.

Proverbs 13:1

A wise son hears his father’s instruction, but a scoffer **does not listen** to rebuke.

This **scoffer** acts with arrogant pride, think they know more than everyone else, think they’re better than everyone else. They use people to get what they want, rather than sacrificing what they want for the benefit of other people.

*The **scorning fool** is vengeful, proud, and not submissive — and yet they are at times the smartest, the most sophisticated, even most educated person in the room — watch out.*

4. THE SENSUAL FOOL

Proverbs 10:23

Doing wrong is like a joke to a fool

Sensual fools are unashamed in their immorality — their glory is in wrongdoing.

The proverbs that warn about the seductive nature of sin are for the sensual fool. They live for immediate gratification and pleasure — whether sexual, material, or financial. They are wildly impulsive, have no restraint, and seem hell-bent on making terrible decisions that completely destroy their own lives — *and the lives of those close to them.*

This is exactly the warning in...

Proverbs 13:10

“...a companion of fools will be destroyed.”

Not because that person is a fool, but because they keep company with someone that will bring destruction on them.

5. THE SENSELESS FOOL

Proverbs 10:13-14

On the lips of him who has understanding, wisdom is found, but a rod is for the back of him who **lacks sense**.¹⁴ The wise lay up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool brings ruin near.

The **senseless fool** speaks up about things that they know nothing about. Their mouth gets them in trouble — they despise learning and instruction, easily angered, enticed, prone to jealousy.

One thing they *love* to do is prod and provoke arguments for the sake — not of persuasion or learning — but just for the reaction, just to argue.

The **sensual** fool and the **senseless** fool are similar in that they’re both wildly impulsive.

Proverbs 6:32

He who commits adultery **lacks sense**; he who does it **destroys himself**.

Proverbs 10 tells us that the only thing that gets the senseless fool's attention is not logic or reason, not compelling argument — *but the rod*. In other words, harsh, painful consequences are the only form of correction they learn from, and even then — it's no guarantee that they will learn.

No one person fits neatly into any one of these categories — but every single one of us has elements of some or maybe all of these in our lives.

If that's true... what do we do about it?

FREEDOM FROM FOOLISHNESS

How do you stop being a fool?

Well, unfortunately — you can't.

You can't try hard enough...

you can't self-effort your way out of foolishness...

you can't be disciplined enough...

you can't just say, "I'm going to be really good at taking criticism..."

you can't say, "I'm not going to be impulsive anymore..."

It's just not that easy — because each of us is a fool in some way, shape, or form.

What do we do? Look at what Paul says to the church in Corinth, which had all kinds of division, sin, arguments, and quarrelling.

1 Corinthians 1:26

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.

- In other words, you were a bunch of nobodies! You were all foolish according to the world's standards.

1 Corinthians 1:27

But **God chose** what is **foolish** in the world to **shame the wise**;

- God chose the slowest, dumbest, foulest, weakest, the most foolish among us to lead His kingdom!

1 Corinthians 1:27-28

...God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are.

- Paul is telling us that God's kingdom operates by a completely different standard than the world. Why?

1 Corinthians 1:29

...**so that** no human being might boast in the presence of God.

- So that any ounce of accomplishment or success in your life is not seen solely as a result of your own effort, goodness, morality, discipline — but as a gift of God over your life.
- So that we wouldn't take the credit.
- If you think you are God's gift to the world, or that you're the world's gift to God — you are wise in your own eyes, and that makes you a fool.

If you find within yourself, any hint of foolishness today — Paul gives us the solution...

1 Corinthians 3:18

If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, **let him become a fool that he may become wise.**

In other words, **the only way to avoid being a fool is to become a fool.** The only way to find freedom from foolishness, is through a certain kind of foolishness...

1 Corinthians 1:20-25

²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? **Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?** ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through **the folly of what we preach** to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach **Christ crucified**, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.** ²⁵ For the **foolishness of God is wiser than men**, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

“Through the foolishness of our preaching people are saved.”
Preaching what? Christ Crucified.

Scripture tells us The Gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing.

The only way to be free of foolishness — *is to become a fool for Christ.*

You want to be wise? *Become a fool for Christ.*

You want to be guarded by the wisdom of God? *Become a fool for the Kingdom.*

CONCLUSION

**You can be a SIMPLE FOOL, a STUBBORN FOOL,
a SCORNING FOOL, a SENSUAL FOOL, a SENSELESS FOOL —
OR, you can become a fool for Christ,
and live in power and protection of the wisdom of God.**

Discussion Questions

1. What can you say to someone who wants to define their own reality, to live life the way they believe is true for them?
2. Have you ever gotten caught up living as a “moralist” — believing that if you live a good moral and spiritual life, that tragedy and hardship will not be part of your life?
3. Which fool do you identify with most: Simple, Stubborn, Scorning, Sensual, Senseless?
4. How do you stop being a fool?
5. What does it mean to “become a fool for Christ”?

NOTES