

Sermon or Lesson: Pursue Wisdom - Part 8: Thinking And Corresponding Behaviors That Are Characteristic Of Foolishness (NIV based)

[Lesson Question: For each main verse quote below, analyze, discuss, and describe the thinking and corresponding behaviors that are characteristic of foolishness, and include how those thinking and behaviors can inflict and affect believers.]

SECTION POINT: Fools operate within a warped, corrupted, defective, and deficient perspective and thinking process because they lack pure thinking and genuine spiritual wisdom that come from God.

- - Proverbs 28:26a **"He who trusts in himself is a fool,..."**, and Proverbs 12:15a **"The way of a fool seems right to him,..."**

- - A basic element, that provides the foundation for a sizeable portion of foolishness, is the thinking of persons that they have good or sufficiently-good judgment skills, concluding that therefore they can and usually do make correct evaluations, decisions, choices, and take corresponding actions in life that will produce the results that they want.

- - The various aspects and results of this approach "seem right" "in their own eyes", so they "trust" in [themselves] as they utilize and implement this self-oriented and self-generated approach. (v.12:15a, Strong's Hebrew #5869; v.28:26a)

- - This kind of thinking and approach is innate to every human - by our nature we humans automatically rely on our own intellect, our own "capacity and ability to learn, understand, reason, and draw on knowledge" to make judgments and then take actions accordingly, throughout each day. (AHD - 'intellect')

- - Essentially, we 'trust in ourselves' to make decisions and take actions that we expect will be beneficial for what we want.

- - A major flaw with this approach, however, is when the judgment and its corresponding approach in some manner fail to align with what God approves of or wants, thereby being rendered by God as foolishness and/or as sinfulness.

- - For true believers, there is an ongoing daily huge challenge to view situations in life from God's perspective, to ascertain or know what God approves of or wants for each situation, and then to accordingly willingly submit to and implement the corresponding approach fully in the manner that God approves of or wants, even though God's approach may prove to be in some way more costly for that true believer.

- - This is where spiritual wisdom from God is crucial to consistently successfully accomplish this objective.

- - Proverbs 23:9 **"Do not speak to a fool, for he will scorn the wisdom of your words."**

-- Fools straightforwardly reject spiritual wisdom, even to the extent of:

- - - - "scorn" it - "contempt, disdain, or hostility felt toward what is considered despicable or unworthy"; (AHD - 'scorn')

- - - - "despise" it - "to dislike intensely; loathe"; "to disrespect, treat with rudeness". (Strong's Hebrew #0936; AHD - 'despise', 'disrespect')

- - This kind of reaction should be expected when speaking spiritual wisdom to a fool.

- - In order to incite such a strong reaction, apparently the particular spiritual wisdom is in some manner offensive to fools, probably because it opposes something that is important or of value to them.
- - Another possibility is that the spiritual wisdom directly contradicts a belief or theory that they strongly or fervently hold.
- - A third possibility is that the spiritual wisdom distinctly unveils, exposes, and condemns sinfulness or wickedness of the fool.
- - Whatever the case for their hostile reaction to the spiritual wisdom being spoken to them, the fools are not open to in any manner accepting that spiritual wisdom at that time.
- - Sadly, believers in churches and ministries also commonly do indeed reject spiritual wisdom when they are presented or confronted with it directly from the Scriptures, which can even be to the extent of being hostile.
- - This rejection is beyond utterly foolish, because as believers they should know better than to outright reject what God says in His Word.
- - Furthermore, as believers, how do they expect God to bless them if clearly they are believing and/or behaving in a manner that God disapproves of?
- - How can they rightly claim that they are in a totally-healthy and excellent relationship with God when the Scriptures distinctly declare that they are substantially living outside of what God approves of?
- - Well, sooner or later, they will reap what they sow. (Galatians 6:7-8)

- - 1 Timothy 6:9 **"People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction."**

- - The thinking or mindset of "wanting to get rich" creates the intense "temptation and trap" of engaging in "desires" that are "foolish and harmful", which people easily "fall into".
- - Wealth enables indulging in activities of pleasure and self-gratification.
- - The desire for wealth can cultivate greed and fraud.
- - Fools are prone to getting easily and readily caught up in these kinds of thinking and subsequent corresponding behaviors, which inevitably lead to what God considers to be "ruin and destruction".
- - Therefore, by its nature, wealth and the desire for wealth promote foolishness in most people and pose a formidable obstruction to wisdom.
- - For believers, wealth, the acquiring of wealth, and the maintaining of wealth furthermore pose a substantial obstacle to doing ministry to the extent and in the manner that God desires for each of those believers. (vv.7,22 in Matthew 13:3-9,18-23)

- - Proverbs 10:23 **"A fool finds pleasure in evil conduct,..."**

- - Fools enjoy doing wickedness, engaging in and perpetrating "evil conduct".
- - They "find pleasure" in doing 'evil conduct', even to the extent that like in a sport, they "laugh in merriment and defiance", "mock, taunt, and scoff", and "ridicule with a feeling of superiority mingled with intense dislike". (Strong's Hebrew #7814; BibleHub #7814, with *AHD* - 'jeer', 'derision')
- - A significant reason for their pleasure and enjoyment is that they have quickly become skilled in successfully executing and accomplishing their selected ways of doing evil conduct, without exerting much effort or expense.

- - They do what they want and they take what they want, with ease, and at their will, while masterfully evading accountability.
- - These superior profitable results feed and breed their superior-minded glee.
- - Thereby and of course, these **"fools detest turning from evil"** (v.13:19), "intensely disliking and abhorring" leaving their evil conduct that has been so rewarding to them. (AHD - 'detest')

- - In contrast to this evil thinking and behaviors of fools, true believers know that the day of complete accountability to God is coming for every human being, including themselves.

- - And they know that on that Judgment Day, **"The wrath of God [will be] revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness"**. (Romans 1:18)

- - Thereby, true believers develop a healthy fear of the Lord, with profound respect for His supreme and perfect holiness, His infinite power, His limitless knowledge, and His ability and determination to enforce absolute justice, albeit delayed justice until Judgment Day.

- - As true believers mature in the faith and mature in their fear of the Lord, they endeavor to adopt God's regard for evil, which is proclaimed in this next verse.

- - Proverbs 8:13 {personification} **"To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I [wisdom (v.12)] hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech."**

- - By the Lord's design, spiritual wisdom is directly contrary to and steadfastly oppositional to evil, even to the extent that it "hates" evil as the Lord does.

- - There are no exceptions - He stands against and hates all evil that is conducted by humans - evil in our thinking ("pride and arrogance"), evil in our behaviors ("evil behavior"), and evil in our speaking ("perverse speech").

- - To engage in any form of evil puts a person in a direct position against the Lord, the most powerful Being in and over the universe and all that exists.

- - By implication from this verse, the Lord hates the evil and wicked thinking and conduct that fools engage in, 'find pleasure in', and 'detest turning from'.

- - Either fools do not know or they do not care that the evil they engage in puts them in a direct and confrontational position against the most powerful Being in the universe.

- - These fools have no fear of the Lord.

- - And while **"[their] heart"** is technically **"raging against the Lord"**, **"[their] own folly ruins [their] life"**. (Proverbs 19:3)

- - They are being **"led astray by [their] own great [and "abundant"] folly"**. (Proverbs 5:23; Strong's Hebrew #7230)

- - If these fools continue down this path of evil and direct opposition against the Lord, without being genuinely reconciled to Him, eventually He will cause that their fate will be ongoing "ruin and destruction" within the eternal punishment that the Lord will force upon them in the next life. (Colossians 1:19-23; adapted from 1 Timothy 6:9)

- - To assist true believers in their endeavor to "hate evil" in their own personal life, the Lord offers them spiritual wisdom from heaven.

- - And from Proverbs 8:13 therefore, in order for true believers to successfully acquire spiritual wisdom, they must simultaneously develop and enhance a healthy fear of the Lord. (cf. Proverbs 14:16a)

- - Proverbs 20:3b **"...every fool is quick to quarrel."**
 - - Apparently, fools extensively evaluate various topics of interest to them, because they become totally-convinced that their opinions on those topics are absolutely correct, right, best, and wise.
 - - This thinking becomes so intense and entrenched in them, that they subsequently become "obstinate"- "stubbornly adhering to their opinion and inflexibly maintaining their position" on the topic, even to the extent of "exposing themselves" in outright dogged "quarrelling" about it. (Strong's Hebrew #1566, *AHD* - 'obstinate')
 - - **"Fools find no pleasure in understanding"** nor in acquiring understanding on the topic from some other person with a different opinion, and instead, they tunnel-vision focus on and **"delight in airing [their] own opinions"**. (Proverbs 18:2)
 - - A major problem with and reason for this approach, though, is that they are operating within a warped, corrupted, defective, and deficient perspective and thinking process because they lack pure thinking and genuine spiritual wisdom that come from God.
 - - In essence, all of this approach is a part of being "led astray by [their] own great [and "abundant"] folly", which is blinding and subverting them from actual truth and reality. (Proverbs 5:23)
 - - For us true believers, **"we have the mind of Christ"**, and thereby we have access to seeing actual truth and reality. (v.16 in 1 Corinthians 2:11-16)
 - - The challenge for us true believers, therefore, is to create conditions in our own spiritual heart and life in which we readily identify and draw upon that truth, reality, and spiritual wisdom that come from God.
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BIG IDEA: To avoid engaging in foolishness, true believers need to effectively draw upon actual truth, reality, and spiritual wisdom, which have been made available to them by means of Christ.

APPLICATIONS:

- - For those of you who are true believers, typically do you rely on your own judgment skills when you encounter challenging or new situations in life? Or instead, do you inquire of the Lord what to do or how to proceed through those situations?
- - As a true believer, do you at times reject, or by default ignore spiritual wisdom, or sound doctrine, or spiritual exhortation when it is presented to you, directly from the Scriptures? If so, **why**??? Do you honestly think that God approves of you rejecting or ignoring what He is saying to you from His Scriptures?
- - Have you fallen into the 'temptation and trap' of 'wanting to get rich'? Be honest with yourself. If you now want to get out of that trap, what are you going to do?
- - Even though you are a true believer, do you have some kind of evil conduct or secret vice that you find pleasurable and have not gotten rid of? If so, are you willing to now face the fact that God considers this kind of behavior as not only sinful, but also as foolish for you, like it is for non-believer fools.

- - Are you significantly maturing in the faith, maturing in your fear of the Lord, and adopting God's regard for evil? If not, is it wise not to be?
- - Are you endeavoring to 'hate evil' in your own personal life? Are you making substantial progress in that endeavor? If not, do you think acquiring and implementing more spiritual wisdom would be helpful in that endeavor?
- - When you get into discussions wherein your opinion differs from the other person(s), do you tend to escalate the discussion into a quarrel? What would be the wise response for you when in a discussion of differing opinions?

- - For all of us here, true believers and non-true believers, in honesty, are you desiring to draw upon the truth, reality, and spiritual wisdom that come from God?
 - - Or instead, are you intending on continuing to live your life in the way that you have been in the past, and thereby essentially foolishly ignoring and thereby rejecting any incentive and effort to improve your life by means of drawing on truth, reality, and spiritual wisdom that come from God?
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