

Intro:

Today I want to look at Madame Folly's victim. Our subject today is "Characteristics of Sir Simple."¹

Robert Deffinbaugh says this about the 'simple':

"There is a great deal of difference between being simple and being stupid. To most of us the word 'simple' conjures up thoughts of a near imbecile, or, as some would put it, a person who is several bricks short of a load. That is not what is meant by the term 'simple' in the Book of Pr. Being simple is a stage in the development of every person, very much like adolescence. Everyone must go through the 'simple' phase of life, just as they go through puberty. But simplicity is also a very dangerous time in life because those who are simple are so vulnerable and gullible. Furthermore, being simple is one short step from being a fool, so this critical period in life must be lived very carefully. Those of us who have already passed this point in life may now have children who fall into this category, but if not, we will nevertheless find it necessary to deal with those who are simple. Therefore, we too must listen well to the words of Pr as they define both the condition and the cure for those who are simple."²

Texts:

Pr 1.4 To give prudence to the **naive**, To the youth knowledge and discretion,

Pr 7.7 And I saw among the **naive**, And discerned among the youths A young man lacking sense,

KJV Pr 1.4 To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.

KJV Pr 7.7 And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding,

¹ Title and many major points taken from Robert L. Deffinbaugh, *The Way of the Wise: Studies in the Book of Pr* (Biblical Studies Press, 1996), www.bible.org — Title from p. 24.

² Deffinbaugh, 24.

“Simplicity is an Ailment of the Young”³

I. Being simple is not a **sin**, but a phase in one’s **growth** toward **maturity**

A. Everyone starts ‘simple’ – it is a stage of spiritual development

B. Compare 1 Cor 3

1 Cor 3.1-3 ¶ And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. ² I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able *to receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, ³ for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

1. Originally, these folks are ‘infants’ in Christ (1)

2. Fed only with milk (2)

3. But they are ‘still fleshly’ [κιν ‘carnal’] – some time has passed (3)

“Their immaturity had become carnality — willful ignorance and immaturity. While it was not wrong to be fleshly (babes), it was sin to be fleshly (carnal). What begins as immaturity can become carnality.”⁴

C. The simple in Pr are simply immature (generally speaking)

II. Simplicity is a phase in one’s growth; but one cannot remain simple just as one cannot remain an **adolescent**

A. Simplicity is a phase

B. Simplicity passes

1. Through active growth, to wisdom

2. Through passivity, to foolishness

3. Or through rebellion, to foolish wickedness

If you do not pursue hard after wisdom, you will become a fool.

Remember our definition of wisdom: “Skill in applying spiritual (Bible) truth to life.”

³ Deffinbaugh, 24.

⁴ Deffinbaugh, 24.

III. Simplicity is not remedied by **time**, but by **choice**

A. Pr 1.10

Pr 1.10 My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent.

B. Pr 1.15

Pr 1.15 My son, do not walk in the way with them. Keep your feet from their path,

C. Pr 1.22-23

Pr 1.22-23 “How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing And fools hate knowledge? ²³ “Turn to my reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.

The challenge of Pr is to make a conscious choice to pursue wisdom.

IV. While simplicity is normally a malady of the **young**, every age has its **pitfalls**

A. Madame Folly has wiles for every phase of life — a man can become a fool at any given moment... and many have!

1. Compare Paul’s instructions to the young (1 Tim 4.12; 6.11)

1 Tim 4.12 Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but *rather* in speech, conduct, love, faith *and* purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.

1 Tim 6.11 ¶ But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness.

and

2. Paul’s instructions to those who are older (Tit 2.2-5)

Tit 2.2-5 Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. ³ Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, ⁴ so that they may encourage the young women to love their

husbands, to love their children, ⁵ *to be* sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.

- B. A 'mid-life crisis' is simply an example of a man who decides to be a fool.
(See David, 2 Sam 11)

V. Simplicity is a condition fraught with dangers

- A. The simple are deficient in some essential areas

1. Lack wisdom (Ps 19.7)

Ps 19.7 The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

2. Lack knowledge and discretion (Pr 1.4)

Pr 1.4 To give prudence to the naive, To the youth knowledge and discretion,

3. Lack understanding (Ps. 119.130; Pr. 9.4, 16)

Ps 119.130 The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.

Pr 9.4 "Whoever is naive, let him turn in here!" To him who lacks understanding she says,

Pr 9.16 "Whoever is naive, let him turn in here," And to him who lacks understanding she says,

4. Lack sense (Pr 7.7)

Pr 7.7 And I saw among the naive, *And* discerned among the youths A young man lacking sense,

5. Lack foresight (Pr 14.15, 22.3)

Pr 14.15 The naive believes everything, But the sensible man considers his steps.

Pr 22.3 The prudent sees the evil and hides himself, But the naive go on, and are punished for it.

- B. The simple — like all fallen mankind — are inclined toward evil, and not toward what is good and righteous
1. Ignorant – yes
 2. Inexperienced – yes
 3. Inclined toward evil – especially this!

“In a sense, they are spiritually accident-prone. They tend toward what is harmful and destructive. Left to themselves the simple will not become wise, but will stumble into folly and disaster.”⁵

Pr 1.22 “How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing And fools hate knowledge?”

Pr 1.32 “For the waywardness of the naive will kill them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them.”

Pr 14.18 The naive inherit foolishness, But the sensible are crowned with knowledge.

- C. The simple are often the target of those who are evil and unscrupulous

“A ‘con artist’ makes it his business to identify the gullible person and to profit from his or her naiveté. The simple are often the victims of evil men and women who know that the simple are vulnerable.”⁶

1. Wicked men seek out simple young men to turn to their evil ways (Pr 1.10-19)
2. Madame Folly seeks out simple young men as well (7.6-27, 9.13-18)

“While the simple tend to wander toward disaster, it aggressively pursues them as well.”⁷

⁵ Deffinbaugh, 25.

⁶ Deffinbaugh, 25.

⁷ Deffinbaugh, 25.

This is why parents need to guard their children from their friends – be involved in helping them make good choices and steering them away from bad choices.

VI. Simplicity, while a dangerous malady, is not an **incurable** one

A. Not all the simple turn to Madame Folly. Some turn to Dame Wisdom.

In Pilgrim's Progress, all the pilgrims must pass through Vanity Fair. Some succumb to temptations and are trapped into ineffectual Christian lives. Others pass on and are strengthened by their experience.

B. The solution for the simple is to turn from folly, to reject wicked men and refuse evil women, and to pursue wisdom (1.23; 2.1-11; 3.1-26; 4.1-27)

Pr 1.23 "Turn to my reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.

1. They need not learn from personal failure
 - a. They can learn by observation
 - b. They can learn by receiving instruction
2. The Lord will aid the simple who want His help

Ps 116.6 The LORD preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me.

3. The Scripture is the primary protection of the Simple

Ps 19.7 The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

Ps 119.130 The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.

Pr 7.1-5 My son, keep my words And treasure my commandments within you.² Keep my commandments and live, And my teaching as the apple of your eye.³ Bind them on your fingers; Write them on the tablet of your heart.⁴ Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," And call understanding *your* intimate friend;⁵ That they may keep you from an adulteress, From the foreigner who flatters with her words.

There is a way of escaping for the Simple (even after failure)! (1 Cor 10.13)

^{1 Cor 10.13} No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.