

Intro:

Last week we began a study called “*Anatomy of a Fool*,” although ‘anatomy’ might not be quite the right descriptor.

Kidner says, “The fool meets us under various names.”¹

We find three names in Pr 1.22 (two other terms for ‘fool’ in Proverbs)

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

- The naïve (simple KJV)
- The scoffer (scorner KJV)
- The fool

Proposition: The fool of Proverbs is a comprehensive look at man in varying degrees of spiritual antagonism to the things of God.

I. The simple**A. Characteristics**

Gullibility (1.10), youths (1.4; 7.7), lack sense (7.7; 9.4, 16), easily seduced (7.7, 21-22), not sensible (14.15, 18), weak-willed (22.3; 27.12), heart problem (22.15), vanity (emptiness) (15.21, 12.11)

The simple can either be led (9.1-6) or misled (9.13-18)

B. Fate of the simple without wisdom

Pass on into foolishness (14.18), Ultimately destruction (1.32), Only cure is turning to wisdom (9.4-6)

“If [the simple] refuses [wisdom], he will graduate to a more serious condition: ‘The simple acquire folly ... but the prudent are crowned with knowledge’ (14.25), for one does not stay still: a man who is emptyheaded will end up wrongheaded.”²

¹ Derek Kidner, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 17 (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1964), 36.

² Kidner, 16–17.

II. The fool

A. Three words: כָּסִיל *k^esil*; אָוִיל *‘^ewil*; נָבַל *nabal*

1. כָּסִיל *k^esil* **obstinate**

2. אָוִיל *‘^ewil* **insolent**

3. נָבַל *nabal* **boor**

a. Includes concepts found in other two words

b. But also emphasizes “being ignoble and disgraceful, a downright boor. Insensibility to God, as well as a moral insensibility, close the mind to reason.”³

B. Many shared characteristics [*k^esil* and *‘^ewil* respectively]

Folly, Despise discipline and correction, Lack wisdom, Foolish speech, Lack self-control and are hot tempered, Insolent, intractable, incorrigible, bound to folly, Cannot manage home or money, Proud, Punished

C. The boorish fool *nabal*

1. Noun form occurs only three times in Proverbs (17.21; 30.21-22, 30.32)

Pr 17.21 He who sires a **fool** [kesil] *does so* to his sorrow,
And the father of a **fool** [nabal] has no joy.

Pr 30.21-22 Under three things the earth quakes,
And under four, it cannot bear up:

²² Under a slave when he becomes king,
And a **fool** when he is satisfied with food,

Pr 30.32 If you have been **foolish** in exalting yourself
Or if you have plotted *evil*, *put your hand on your mouth.*

2. Verb occurs once (17.7)

Pr 17.7 Excellent speech is not fitting for a **fool**,
Much less are lying lips to a prince.

³ Louis Goldberg, “1285 Nabal,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 547.

Proverbs description of *nabal* “adds little to the picture already built up, except an extra weight of boorishness... It does underline, however, the fact that the fool, by whatever name he goes, is by definition one whose mind is closed, for the present at least, to God (like the *nabal* of Ps 14.1) and to reason (like the Nabal of whom his wife said, ‘One cannot speak to him’, 1 Sam 25.17), since he has rejected the first principle of wisdom, the fear of the Lord.”⁴

D. How to deal with a fool

1. **Avoid** him (13.20)

Pr 13.20 He who walks with wise men will be wise,
But the companion of fools will suffer harm.

2. **Remove** him (26.6)

Pr 26.20 For lack of wood the fire goes out,
And where there is no whisperer, contention quiets
down.

3. **Endure** him

“Some people, however, cannot disown him; it is their tragedy. To his father and mother the fool brings sorrow (10.1; 17.21), bitterness (17.25) and calamity (19.13). It is the price of loving him; but it causes him no qualms — he despises them (15.20).”⁵

Pr 10.1 The proverbs of Solomon.
A wise son makes a father glad,
But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.

Pr 17.21 He who sires a fool *does so* to his sorrow,
And the father of a fool has no joy.

Pr 17.25 A foolish son is a grief to his father
And bitterness to her who bore him.

⁴ Kidner, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, 38–39.

⁵ Kidner, 38.

Pr 19.13 A foolish son is destruction to his father,
And the contentions of a wife are a constant dripping.

Pr 15.20 A wise son makes a father glad,
But a foolish man despises his mother.

III. The scorner (רִיבִּי לִיִּץ)

“The most hardened apostates are the mockers (*leš[im]*).”⁶

“The scoffer ... is contrasted with the wise, or coupled with the foolish, often enough to earn a place of his own in the fools’ gallery. His presence there makes it finally clear that mental attitude, not mental capacity, classifies the man.”⁷

A. Relation to the wise

1. The **antithesis** of the wise (9.12; 13.1; 20.1; 24.1) and the discerning (14.6; 19.25)

Pr 9.12 If you are wise, you are wise for yourself,
And if you scoff, you alone will bear it.

Pr 14.6 A scoffer seeks wisdom and *finds* none,
But knowledge is easy to one who has understanding.

Pr 19.25 Strike a scoffer and the naive may become shrewd,
But reprove one who has understanding and he will gain knowledge.

2. He **hates** the wise (9.7-8; 15.12)

Pr 9.7-8 He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself,
And he who reproves a wicked man *gets* insults for himself.

⁸ Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you,
Reprove a wise man and he will love you.

Pr 15.12 A scoffer does not love one who reproves him,
He will not go to the wise.

⁶ Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 114.

⁷ Kidner, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, 39.

B. **Pride** is his singular defining spiritual flaw (21.24)

Pr 21.24 “Proud,” “Haughty,” “Scoffer,” are his names,
Who acts with insolent pride.

C. His influence is in his **poison tongue** (29.8)

Pr 29.8 Scorners set a city aflame,
But wise men turn away anger.

D. Even the **average man** can see his wickedness (24.9)

Pr 24.9 The devising of folly is sin,
And the scoffer is an abomination to men.

E. When he is driven out of society, contention **ceases** (22.10)

Pr 22.10 Drive out the scoffer, and contention will go out,
Even strife and dishonor will cease.

“No man earns more universal detestation or deserves it more than he who wears a perpetual sneer, who is himself incapable of deep loyalty and reverence and who supposes that it is his mission in life to promote the corrosion of the values by which individuals and society lives.”⁸

F. The destiny of scorners

1. Men will **punish** (19.29)

Pr 19.29 Judgments are prepared for scoffers,
And blows for the back of fools.

2. God will **mock** (3.34)

Pr 3.34 Though He scoffs at the scoffers,
Yet He gives grace to the afflicted.

⁸ McKane, Proverbs, p. 399, quoted by Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 114.

Conclusion:

The portrait we have painted here is too brief. To fully appreciate the depth of folly in men's hearts takes patient meditation on God's word and humble self-examination and application of God's word to oneself.

Can someone be a Christian and be a fool?

We would like to think not. But Christians can be proud, and that is foolish. Perhaps Christians are held back somewhat from full foolhardiness by the restraining influence of the Spirit, but nevertheless, many a professing Christian has behaved foolishly.