

HOW TO SPOT A FOOL

Bill Elliff, guest author



They're everywhere. Foolish people dominate the airwaves and are present in our homes, schools, churches, and workplaces. They can even be right inside our own clothes. Everyone has chosen a foolish path at times. And sadly, some have taken up permanent residence in that destructive house.

Fools come in all shapes and sizes. It can be a kid on the streets or the CEO of a company. A young lady who's chosen a path of obvious destruction, or a refined woman in high society. The issue is the heart.

God goes to great lengths in the book of Proverbs to point out what a fool is like. He wants us to recognize those tendencies in our lives and help us know how to respond when we see them in others.

FOOLS ARE UNTEACHABLE

A fool does not delight in understanding, but only in revealing his own mind. (Proverbs 18:2)

The foundation of foolishness is pride. You can't teach a fool. When you try to, they get louder. They are so proud that they don't think they need information from anyone. They've made up their mind about life, sin, their own behavior, the right path, God, religion, politics, work, etc. They are terribly unteachable and will not listen to reason.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7)

This is why God tells us that there is a point where you don't try to reason with a fool any longer. It's like talking to a brick wall.

Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words. (Proverbs 23:9)

Answer a fool as his folly deserves. (Proverbs 26:5)

FOOLS ALWAYS CAUSE STRIFE

A fool's lips bring strife and his mouth calls for blows. A fool's mouth is his ruin and his lips are the snare of his soul. (Proverbs 18:6-7)

A wise man will bring peace into a situation. He will listen attentively, assess properly, and brings a word fit for the need of the moment.

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (James 3:17-18)

A fool is just the opposite because he doesn't care about others or what's best for the moment. He wants everyone to know how right he is. He thinks his opinion is always correct and everyone else is wrong.

Fools talk a lot. The tragedy is that their words bring tension and promote quarreling. They often will not quit and feel they must win the argument at all costs. They are blissfully ignorant of the emotional and relational dynamics in the room. Their self-absorption makes them oblivious.

ABORTING FOOLISHNESS

Do you want to be numbered among the foolish? If not, you must take the path of humility. The beginning of wisdom is to realize you don't have it, that it's from a higher Source, and that you must humbly listen to God and others. A wise man realizes he doesn't have the answers for everything and is quick to hear and slow to speak and is grateful for what God and others bring to his life. And when God gives him wisdom, he gratefully acknowledges that it is from above. Wisdom doesn't have to get the credit for anything.

But humility goes before honor. He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him. (Proverbs 18:13)

I lost my voice once and had to go on total voice rest for several weeks. I found a small plaque and placed it prominently on my desk, and I still have it in my library. Every time I see it, I'm reminded of a fundamental truth. It simply says this:

The wise listen.

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