

Foolishness vs Wisdom in Proverbs

Five Fools and their foolishness:

"Indiscriminate, Obstinate, Despiser, Reviler, Scoffer"

-characteristics of those who reject Godly wisdom and instruction-

Foolishness vs Wisdom

Questions to Ponder

How does one recognize a fool or foolish behavior?

What are some of the causes of foolishness?

How does one recognize a wise person?

In what ways can the Word of God help one to appropriate Godly wisdom and instruction?

Is there anything else that you think is needed in order to search and seek for Godly wisdom and instruction?

Foolishness vs Wisdom

Evaluate this Statement

"It is of paramount importance for one to appropriate God's wisdom and receive instruction in order to be prepared to live life skillfully in light of the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the lust of the pride of life, not to mention resisting the evil present in this world."

In what ways do you agree or disagree with this statement?

How must one go about appropriating Godly wisdom and instruction?

Let's examine the purpose and theme of Proverbs found in Proverbs 1

Statements of Purpose & Statements of Instruction found in Proverbs 1

Statements of Purpose:

Proverbs 1:1-7 contains a clear purpose and (v.7) becomes the thematic statement of Proverbs with an exhortation declaring the foundation of knowledge, which is the source of wisdom and instruction; yet, this passage also reveals two of the five kinds of fools found in Proverbs!

Statements of Instruction:

Proverbs 1:8-32 begins with parental exhortations giving instructions for one to pursue wisdom and warnings to avoid foolishness.

Let's look more directly at this passage about wisdom and foolishness

Proverbs 1:1-7 An Exhortation of Purpose **Pursue Godly Wisdom & Instruction but . . .**

Proverbs 1:1-4 (AMP)

- ¹ The Proverbs (*truths obscurely expressed, maxims, and parables*) of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:
- ² That people may know skillful and godly Wisdom and instruction, discern and comprehend the words of understanding and insight,
- ³ Receive instruction in wise dealing and the discipline of wise thoughtfulness, righteousness, justice, and integrity,
- ⁴ That prudence may be given to the simple³, and knowledge, discretion, and discernment to the youth—
simple³, the 1st kind of fool - petî - indiscriminate

Proverbs 1:1-7 An Exhortation of Purpose *Pursue Godly Wisdom & Instruction but . . .*

Proverbs 1:5-7 (AMP)

⁵ The wise also will hear and increase in learning, and the person of understanding will acquire skill and attain to sound counsel [so that he may be able to steer his course rightly]—[Prov. 9:9.]

⁶ That people may understand a proverb and a figure of speech or an enigma with its interpretation, and the words of the wise and their dark sayings or riddles.

⁷ The reverent and worshipful fear of the Lord is the beginning and the principal and choice part of knowledge [its starting point and its essence]; but fools⁴ despise skillful and godly Wisdom, instruction, and discipline. [Ps. 111:10.]

The 2nd kind of fool⁴ - 'ewîl - Despiser

An Exhortation of Instruction begins: 1:8-33
My son, *Pursue Godly Wisdom & Instruction but . . .*

A father gives 'instruction' to his son to pursue wisdom
and urges warnings of foolishness . . . v.8-33

Proverbs 1:8 My son, hear the instruction of your father; reject not nor forsake the teaching of your mother. . .

The third and fourth kinds of fools are introduced in Pr.1:22,32

Proverbs 1:22(ESV) *How long, O simple(*petî*)³ ones, will you love being simple (*petî*)³? How long will scoffers (*lîş*)⁶ delight in their scoffing(*lîş*)⁶ and fools(*kësîl*)² hate knowledge? . . . ;³² For the simple (*petî*)³ are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools(*kësîl*)² destroys them;*

Wisdom and 4 of the 5 kinds of fools have now been introduced

Examine the source & foundation of wisdom

(knowledge, understanding and instruction are part & parcel with wisdom in Proverbs)

Proverbs 2:6 (ESV) *⁶ For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;*

Proverbs 6:23 (ESV) *²³ For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life,*

Proverbs 8:5–9 (ESV) *⁵ O simple ones, learn prudence; O fools, learn sense.
⁶ Hear, for I will speak noble things, and from my lips will come what is right, ⁷ for my mouth will utter truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips. ⁸ All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them. ⁹ They are all straight to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge.*

Examining the source & foundation of wisdom

(some OT & NT declarations of the source of wisdom)

Psalm 19:7 (ESV)⁷ The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple (*petî*):

John 6:44-45 (ESV)⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—

Ex. 31:3

Ps. 119:104

Dan. 1:17

I Kings 4:29

Job 32:8

Eph. 1:17,18

James 1:5,17

The importance of 'the fear of the Lord'

Proverbs 1:7 (AMP)

⁷ The reverent and worshipful fear of the Lord is the beginning and the principal and choice part of knowledge [its starting point and its essence]; but fools⁴ ([‘]ewil) despise skillful and godly Wisdom, instruction, and discipline.
[Ps. 111:10.]

This theme is restated in Proverbs 9:10 (AMP)

¹⁰ The reverent and worshipful fear of the Lord is the beginning (the chief and choice part) of Wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight and understanding.

David Den Hartog has described "the fear of the Lord" as:⁷

Pr.1:7 -

"... the principal constituent. . ."⁷

Pr.9:10 -

". . . the essential prerequisite . ."⁷

The importance of 'the fear of the Lord'

Others have described "the fear of the Lord" as Reverent Awe!

Which of these phrases do you think best describes "the fear of the Lord" ?

*the chief/principal & choice part, the principal constituent,
an essential prerequisite or reverence and awe ? Other?*

Bruce Walke had this to say:

"Here, then, Solomon indicates that a person can only be truly wise when he acknowledges that wisdom ultimately comes from the Lord Himself, and when he roots his pursuit of wisdom in worship of the Lord. "What the alphabet is to reading, notes to reading music, and numerals to mathematics, the fear of the Lord is to attaining the revealed knowledge of this book"

*(Waltke, Book of Proverbs 1-15, 181)."**

***What do you think Waltke meant by
". . . roots his pursuit of wisdom in worship of the Lord. . . "?***

r, *"Proverbs," in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 891.

For reference & further study: 15 “Fear of the Lord” passages

1. Psalm 111:10 (The Living Bible, Paraphrased) ¹⁰How can men be wise? The only way to begin is by reverence for God. For growth in wisdom comes from obeying his laws. Praise his name forever.
2. Ps 19:9 **The fear of the Lord** is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
3. Prov 1:7 **The fear of the Lord** is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.
4. Eccles 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: **Fear God** and keep His commandments, For this is man's all.
5. Prov 9:10 **The fear of the Lord** is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
6. Prov 1:29 Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the **fear of the Lord**,
7. Prov 14:27 The **fear of the Lord** is a fountain of life, To turn one away from the snares of death.
8. Prov 16:6 In mercy and truth Atonement is provided for iniquity; And by the **fear of the Lord** one departs from evil.
9. Prov 19:23 The **fear of the Lord** leads to life, And he who has it will abide in satisfaction; He will not be visited with evil.
10. Prov 15:33 The **fear of the Lord** is the instruction of wisdom, And before honor is humility.
11. Prov 2:5 Then you will understand the **fear of the Lord**, And find the knowledge of God.
12. 2 Chron 19:9 And he commanded them, saying, “Thus you shall act in the **fear of the Lord**, faithfully and with a loyal heart:
13. Prov 10:27 The **fear of the Lord** prolongs days, But the years of the wicked will be shortened.
14. Prov 15:16 Better is a little with the **fear of the Lord**, Than great treasure with trouble.
15. Prov 23:17 Do not let your heart envy sinners, But be zealous for the **fear of the Lord** all the day;

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Tip: A Contemporary look at Wisdom and/or the lack thereof; read Proverbs 30:1-16 in the Message Bible

A closer look at the foolishness of the fools

If one would evaluate the degree of foolishness of each kind of fool; it appears that there might be 'some hope' for some fools, but there is an evident digression towards 'little' and 'no hope' for many fools. Because all fools have a natural resistance to appropriating wisdom & instruction.

What do you think is the common cause for resistance to wisdom?

The 5-fool digression from 'some hope' towards 'little' and 'no hope' looks like:

Some hope . . . *petî* \geq *kësîl* \geq *'eŵîl* \geq *nābal* \geq *lîş* . . . no hope

... Or as I have labeled them . . .

Indiscriminate \geq Obstinate \geq Despiser \geq Reviler \geq Scoffer

Let's look at each one and their resistance to wisdom & instruction; notice an increasing hardening of their hearts toward God & others!

petî

- Phonetic Pronunciation: peh'-thee³ (14 uses)

Indiscriminate . . . maybe "some hope"

Petî (פָּתִי Strong's H6612), often translated as "simple one," "naive," or "gullible,"

Characteristics: young, open to influence, indiscriminate, naïve, gullible,
cannot foresee consequences, looks after leaping, naturally foolish

Proverbs 1:4

-purpose to give discernment to the simple⁸

Proverbs 1:22,32;7:7;8:5;-calls to wisdom and warnings for foolishness

-wisdom and folly call for him⁸

Proverbs 14:15,18

-gullibility, folly prone

Proverbs 19:25;21:11

-learns prudence from seeing a scoffer smitten

Proverbs 22:3

-ignorance of consequences⁸

Proverbs 27:12

-rushes into evil without awareness of consequence⁸

kĕsîl Phonetic Pronunciation: kes-eel'-² (50 uses-most common?)

Obstinate . . . maybe “some hope”

kĕsîl קֵסִיל Strong's H3688), “fat, i.e. stupid or silly [or sluggish].” . . . determined to make wrong choices. . . . rejects the wisdom of God, . . . leads others astray¹

Characteristics: most are young, obstinate, hater, too quick to speak, “deceitful, quarrelsome, unreasonable, stubborn, thick, plump, fat”⁸

Proverbs 8:1-11 -wisdom invites the kĕsîl⁸ (maybe “some hope”)

Proverbs 14:8; 19:1 -“Deceitful”⁸

Proverbs 15:2,7,14,20 -Obstinacy and folly

Proverbs 17:10,12,16,21,24,25 -“Does not listen to rebuke”⁸

Proverbs 18:2,6,7 -“Quarrelsome”⁸

Proverbs 21:20 -“Thriftless”⁸

Proverbs 1:22,32; 3:35; 10:1,18,23; 12:23; 13:16,19,20; 14:7; 19:10,13,29; 23:9; 26:1-12; 28:26; 29:11,20 -Strife, destruction, and punishment

’ ***eŵîl*** Phonetic Pronunciation: ev-eel’⁴ (19 uses)

Despiser . . . “no hope”

eŵîl אַוִילּ n.m. “fool (always morally bad), who despises wisdom & discipline
Pr 1:7; 15:5; mocks at guilt 14:9; is quarrelsome 20:3; licentious 7:22; it is
folly & useless to instruct him 16:22; 27:22 . . .”⁹

Characteristics: most are older⁸, despising, quarrelsome, mocks sin, licentious, cocksure attitude

Kěsîl hates wisdom & instruction but eŵîl despises it!⁷

Proverbs 10:8,10,14,21

-Babbler

Proverbs 12:15,16

-Cocksure attitude, angry, lack of self-control

Proverbs 14:9; 29:9; 10:23

-Mocking sins, makes a joke of sin

Proverbs 15:5; 16:22

-Despises instruction

Proverbs 17:28; 24:7

-'wise?' only due to silence -says nothing at gate

Proverbs 27:2; 29:9

-Exhibits unreasonable wrath

Proverbs 27:22

-Severe punishment cannot cure this fool

nābāl Phonetic Pronunciation: naw-bawl⁵ (4 uses)
Reviler . . . “no hope”

Nābāl - the 5th kind of fool

נָבָל (nābāl). “. . . nābāl is widely used in the wisdom literature. In Prov, the term nābāl includes the concepts associated with kěsîl and 'ěwîl (q.v.), and also emphasizes being ignoble and disgraceful, a downright boor. Insensibility to God, as well as a moral insensibility, close the mind to reason.”¹⁰

Characteristics: Reviler, ignoble, disgraceful, insensibility to God, “loud, arrogant, no one can speak to him at all, no ethical perception”⁸

1 Sam. 25:14, 17 - “No one can speak to him”⁸
Proverbs 17:7, 21; 30:22, 32 - Deviser of evil

לִשְׁ

Phonetic Pronunciation: *loots*⁶ (14 uses)
Scoffer . . . “no hope”

לִשְׁ - “The scorner (Qal participial form) himself may be described as proud and haughty (Prov 21:24), incorrigible (Prov 9:7), resistant to all reproof (Prov 9:8; 15:12), and hating any rebuke (Prov 13:1). Wisdom and knowledge easily elude him (Prov 14:6).”¹¹

“The scornful fool’s facial expressions communicate the disdain and contempt he has in his heart, toward his authorities, including parents, civil authorities, and God.”¹

Characteristics: Scoffer, inherent pride, incorrigible, contentious spirit, hates rebuke and reproof, disdain & contempt

Proverbs 1:22

Proverbs 9:12

Proverbs 19:25

Proverbs 3:34

Proverbs 13:1

Proverbs 19:28

Proverbs 21:24

Proverbs 9:7

Proverbs 14:6

Proverbs 20:1

Proverbs 22:10

Proverbs 9:8

Proverbs 15:12

Proverbs 21:11

Perhaps the Message Bible Describes the Scoffer & Wisdom Best!

Proverbs 9:7-12 (MSG)

7-12 If you reason with an arrogant cynic, you'll get slapped in the face;
confront bad behavior and get a kick in the shins.
So don't waste your time on a scoffer;
all you'll get for your pains is abuse.
But if you correct those who care about life,
that's different—they'll love you for it!
Save your breath for the wise—they'll be wiser for it;
tell good people what you know—they'll profit from it.
Skilled living gets its start in the Fear-of-GOD,
insight into life from knowing a Holy God.
It's through me, Lady Wisdom, that your life deepens,
and the years of your life ripen.
Live wisely and wisdom will permeate your life;
mock life and life will mock you.

Concluding Observations & Implications concerning Wisdom & Foolishness

- Fools often have great intellect; however, ". . . distinctions of fools from wise is not mental acumen, but willingness to pursue wisdom and receive reproof."⁸
- "Early discipline is important. Pr.22:15"⁸
- "Avoid ^ewîl and do not waste your time, they will pull you down!"⁸ 2 tim.2:23
- Reprove a Scoffer ^{lîs} only 2x and remove them on 3rd time⁸ Pr. 22:10
- "Discernment is needed when determining friendships"⁸
- "Discernment of people needed when determining a discipleship ministry."⁸
- NT Correlations: Ja.1:5-8; 2 Tim.2:23; Eph.5:15-17; Mk.10:27; Mt.5:22<->Col.3:8⁸

7 Contemplations to pursue wisdom & resist foolishness

1. *What is it that the wise have and yet none of the fools have?*
2. *How can my 'fear of the Lord' be further developed?*
3. *Are there areas of my life where I am too indiscriminate?*
4. *Where might I be obstinate to the Lord's leading?*
5. *Are there any areas of instruction that I tend to despise?*
6. *When might I be prone to revile Godliness or the Godly?*
7. *How susceptible am I to scoffing?*

Resources

Institute in Basic Life Principles: How to Identify Five Types of Fools: <https://iblp.org/what-are-five-types-fools/>¹

<https://ref.ly/logosref/HebrewStrongts.3684> *kĕsîl* Phonetic Pronunciation: kes-eel'²

<https://ref.ly/logosref/HebrewStrongts.6612> *petî* Phonetic Pronunciation: peh'-thee³

<https://ref.ly/logosref/HebrewStrongts.191> 'e⁵wîl Phonetic Pronunciation: ev-eel'⁴

<https://ref.ly/logosref/HebrewStrongts.5036> *nâbal* Phonetic Pronunciation: naw-bawl'⁵

<https://ref.ly/logosref/HebrewStrongts.3887> *lîš* Phonetic Pronunciation: loots⁶

A Comparison of the Wise Man and The Fool in the Book of Proverbs, Unpublished Th.M. Master's Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1974, Davud Den Hartog.⁷

Unpublished ALC Class, Principles in Exegesis: Session 1: The “Fool” in the Book of Proverbs, 10/21/2011, Fellowship Bible Church, Don Den Hartog⁸

Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 17.⁹

Louis Goldberg, “1285 ”, תִּבְלִל in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*¹⁰

Walter C. Kaiser, “1113 ”, יְלִי in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 479.¹¹