

THE WAY OF A FOOL

“Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” —PROVERBS 26:12

The book of Proverbs has a great deal to say about the way of a fool and the way of the wise. We meet the fool under different guises; ‘the fool’ and ‘the simple’; the simple being like the younger brother of the fool. Proverbs 14:18 says, “The simple inherit folly.” The third member, “the mocker”, is their cousin, and wisdom calls out to all three. “How long will you simple ones love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge?” (Proverbs 1:22).

The fool, as well as the wise, is not measured by intellectual capacity, but by attitude and disposition. A fool can be a very clever person, but without a change in attitude, will remain a fool. He has opinions about everything, but no pleasure in learning, only in displaying what he knows. Proverbs 18:2 says, “Do not speak to a fool, for he will scorn the wisdom of your ways.” A fool’s convictions are solidified by an unwillingness to adjust his opinion and retain an open mind toward the view of others.

The natural result is that a fool is not open to learning and, consequently, not open to rebuke or discipline, because he’s convinced he’s always right. “The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice” (Proverbs 12:15). What is sad about the fool is that the very thing that is evidence of his foolishness is what he thinks is evidence of his smartness; the fact that he knows everything.

Two aspects usually characterize his behaviour. Proverbs 10:23 says, “A fool finds pleasure in evil conduct, but a man of understanding delights in wisdom.” We are all creative in our own way, but if it’s not constructively channeled, it becomes destructive and abusive. A fool’s creativity is distorted in that it finds pleasure in criticism and mockery. There are always people who will tell us what is wrong, but do nothing in the way of remedial action. Secondly, a fool cannot resist temptation. He lives in the present and wants everything now. There isn’t self-discipline or restraint, and he dives into pleasures without thinking of consequences.

In short, a fool merely indulges himself. On the other hand, a wise person is someone who knows he doesn’t know, and the more he learns, the more he discovers how much there is for him to learn. Proverbs 2:10 tells us, “For wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.” And Proverbs 2:6, “For the LORD gives wisdom...” Wisdom is a gift from God and it’s in humility we receive it.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, grant me an open mind to the views of others and a heart that listens. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: What changes do I need to make to reflect God’s gift of wisdom?