

Proverbs 2025 Pt. 4

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, March 2, 2025

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us. Whether you are here in person or joining via the livestream you are most welcome. Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you like. We have much to cover in a rather short space of time.

SETTING THE STAGE

NOTE 1 – In recent weeks we have noted the presentation of two figures who appear in the Book of Proverbs. I am referring to the figures of Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly. Each provides unique insight into critical aspects of godly life and living: **a)** Lady Wisdom, the insight that God offers to all and His desire for all to both know and walk in His healthful ways; and **b)** Lady Folly, the allure and ultimate consequence of sinfulness. However, these are not the only recurring characters in the Book of Proverbs. No, there are quite a few more!

NOTE 2 – Today I want to introduce you to three interrelated characters, representing three types of people: **a)** the wise; **b)** the simple; and **c)** the fool. Each character offers an idealized portrait or caricature of a type of individual in the earth. Together these three figures form a spectrum—a spectrum we are all on (**SLIDE**). If Lady Wisdom and Folly reveal something of the Lord and sin, respectively, the wise, the simple and the fool reveal something of us, our condition before God, and our spiritual trajectory. In this way they are impacting!

Q. How does the Book of Proverbs present each character to us? How does Scripture characterize each figure?

THE WISE

KEY – Let us begin with a survey of the wise. How does the Bible describe the nature and lifestyle of the wise? The wise are those who are given to the pursuit and application of God's ways, living with insight and understanding before the Lord and among men. They are also called the righteous, the faithful, the prudent and beyond in Proverbs. Such are regarded, rewarded and are to be emulated by all who seek to truly live well!

Q. What are the characteristics of the wise (i.e., more specifically)?

A1. Reverential

Proverbs 14:16 (NIV)

16 The wise fear the Lord and shun evil,
but a fool is hotheaded and yet feels secure.

A2. Discerning

Proverbs 14:15

15 The simple believe anything,
but the prudent give thought to their steps.

A3. Ever-Learning

Proverbs 18:15

15 The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge,
for the ears of the wise seek it out.

Proverbs 9:9

9 Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still;
teach the righteous and they will add to their learning.

A4. Teachable

Proverbs 9:8

8 Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you;
rebuke the wise and they will love you.

Proverbs 10:8

8 The wise in heart accept commands,
but a chattering fool comes to ruin.

Proverbs 12:15

15 The way of fools seems right to them,
but the wise listen to advice.

A5. Self-Controlled

Proverbs 12:16

16 Fools show their annoyance at once,
but the prudent overlook an insult.

Proverbs 19:11

A person's wisdom yields patience;
it is to one's glory to overlook an offense.

A6. Just

Proverbs 24:23–25

23 These also are sayings of the wise:

To show partiality in judging is not good:

24 Whoever says to the guilty, "You are innocent,"

will be cursed by peoples and denounced by nations.

25 But it will go well with those who convict the guilty,
and rich blessing will come on them.

A7. Kind

Proverbs 14:31

31 Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker,
but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.

A8. Careful re: Words

Proverbs 14:3

3 A fool's mouth lashes out with pride,
but the lips of the wise protect them.

Proverbs 15:7

7 The lips of the wise spread knowledge,
but the hearts of fools are not upright.

Proverbs 16:23

23 The hearts of the wise make their mouths prudent,
and their lips promote instruction.

A9. Impacting (+)

Proverbs 13:14

14 The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life,
turning a person from the snares of death.

Proverbs 12:18

18 The words of the reckless pierce like swords,
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

A10. Blessed and Rewarded

Proverbs 9:12

12 If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you;
if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer.

Proverbs 3:33

33 The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked,
but he blesses the home of the righteous.

Proverbs 3:35

35 The wise inherit honor,
but fools get only shame.

THE SIMPLE

KEY – Now what of the simple? How does Scripture define, describe and detail those who bear this label? The simple are those who operate in ignorance. They are not necessarily people of ill or evil intent per se, but they are noted for being gullible, naïve and, therefore, susceptible to the wiles of sinfulness. Such can, therefore, shift either upwards unto wisdom or downwards unto folly. This intermediate state is truly perilous!

QUOTE – “The Hebrew word rendered simple in Proverbs denotes a person who is gullible, without moral direction and inclined to evil.” –NIV Footnote

Q. What are the characteristics of the simple (i.e., more specifically)?

A1. In Need of Repentance

Proverbs 1:22–23

22 “How long will you who are simple love your simple ways?
How long will mockers delight in mockery
and fools hate knowledge?
23 Repent at my rebuke!
Then I will pour out my thoughts to you,
I will make known to you my teachings.

A2. In Danger of Penalty

Proverbs 1:28–33 [Lady Wisdom re: Wayward]

28 “. . . they will call to me but I will not answer;
they will look for me but will not find me,
29 since they hated knowledge
and did not choose to fear the Lord.
30 Since they would not accept my advice
and spurned my rebuke,
31 they will eat the fruit of their ways
and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.
32 For the waywardness of the simple will kill them,
and the complacency of fools will destroy them;
33 but whoever listens to me will live in safety
and be at ease, without fear of harm.”

NOTE – Ignorance of the ways of the Lord does not spare them from the consequence(s) of breaking His ways:

Hosea 4:6

6 “[M]y people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.”

A3. Invited Unto Wisdom

Proverbs 8:1–5

- 1 Does not wisdom call out?
Does not understanding raise her voice?
- 2 At the highest point along the way,
where the paths meet, she takes her stand;
- 3 beside the gate leading into the city,
at the entrance, she cries aloud:
- 4 “To you, O people, I call out;
I raise my voice to all mankind.
- 5 You who are simple, gain prudence;
you who are foolish, set your hearts on it.

Proverbs 9:1–6

- 1 Wisdom has built her house;
she has set up its seven pillars.
- 2 She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine;
she has also set her table.
- 3 She has sent out her servants, and she calls
from the highest point of the city,
- 4 “Let all who are simple come to my house!”
To those who have no sense she says,
- 5 “Come, eat my food
and drink the wine I have mixed.
- 6 Leave your simple ways and you will live;
walk in the way of insight.”

A4. Susceptible

Proverbs 14:16

- 15 The simple believe anything,
but the prudent give thought to their steps.

Proverbs 22:3 (cf. 27:12)

- 3 The prudent see danger and take refuge,
but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.

Q. Would you like a vivid illustration of this principle?

Proverbs 7:6–23

6 At the window of my house
I looked down through the lattice.

7 I saw among the simple,
I noticed among the young men,
a youth who had no sense.

8 He was going down the street near her corner,
walking along in the direction of her house

9 at twilight, as the day was fading,
as the dark of night set in.

10 Then out came a woman to meet him,
dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent.

11 (She is unruly and defiant,
her feet never stay at home;

12 now in the street, now in the squares,
at every corner she lurks.)

13 She took hold of him and kissed him
and with a brazen face she said:

14 “Today I fulfilled my vows,
and I have food from my fellowship offering at home.

15 So I came out to meet you;
I looked for you and have found you!

16 I have covered my bed
with colored linens from Egypt.

17 I have perfumed my bed
with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.

18 Come, let’s drink deeply of love till morning;
let’s enjoy ourselves with love!

19 My husband is not at home;
he has gone on a long journey.

20 He took his purse filled with money
and will not be home till full moon.”

21 With persuasive words she led him astray;
she seduced him with her smooth talk.

22 All at once he followed her
like an ox going to the slaughter,
like a deer stepping into a noose

23 till an arrow pierces his liver,
like a bird darting into a snare,
little knowing it will cost him his life.

A5. Potential and Capacity for Growths

Proverbs 19:25

25 Flog a mocker, and the simple will learn prudence . . .

Proverbs 21:11

11 When a mocker is punished, the simple gain wisdom;
by paying attention to the wise they get knowledge.

THE FOOL

KEY – Lastly, what of the fool? How does Scripture define, describe and detail those who bear this label? The fool refers to those who operate in rebellion against God and His ways. Such are marked not by ignorance, but rejection of truth, being marked by waywardness, worldliness and the consequence(s) thereof. Consider:

QUOTE – “The Hebrew words rendered fool in Proverbs, and often elsewhere in the Old Testament, denote a person who is morally deficient.” –NIV Footnote

Q. What are the characteristics of the fool (i.e., more specifically)?

A1. Inwardly Corrupt

Proverbs 15:7

7 The lips of the wise spread knowledge,
but the hearts of fools are not upright.

A2. Ignores Reproof

Proverbs 17:10

10 A rebuke impresses a discerning person
more than a hundred lashes a fool.

Proverbs 9:8

8 Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you;
rebuke the wise and they will love you.

A3. Despises Instruction

Proverbs 1:7

7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

A4. Proud (Always Correct)

Proverbs 12:15

15 The way of fools seems right to them,
but the wise listen to advice.

A5. Delights in Mischief

Proverbs 10:23

23 A fool finds pleasure in wicked schemes,
but a person of understanding delights in wisdom.

A6. Mocks the Righting of Wrongs

Proverbs 14:9

9 Fools mock at making amends for sin,
but goodwill is found among the upright.

A7. Quick-Tempered

Proverbs 12:16

16 Fools show their annoyance at once,
but the prudent overlook an insult.

Proverbs 14:17

17 A quick-tempered person does foolish things,
and the one who devises evil schemes is hated.

A8. Quarrelsome

Proverbs 20:3

3 It is to one's honor to avoid strife,
but every fool is quick to quarrel.

A9. Dishonoring

Proverbs 15:20

20 A wise son brings joy to his father,
but a foolish man despises his mother.

Proverbs 19:13a

13 A foolish child is a father's ruin . . .

A10. Cursed

Proverbs 3:35

35 The wise inherit honor,
but fools get only shame.

SUMMATIONS

KEY – Earlier I noted that these three recurring characters form a spectrum—a spectrum we are all upon. With this being said, where are you on this spectrum? Which of these three figures do you most resemble, helping to define your spiritual condition? Which are you becoming more like with the passage of time, helping to delineate your spiritual trajectory before God and among men? Do not quickly dismiss such queries!

2 Corinthians 13:14

14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – I would call you to worship God through your giving. Please give online and/or in person.

NOTE 2 – Check out the church website for upcoming events and more (www.NewLifeBarre.org).