

fools

## WISDOM AND FOLLY

In the book of Proverbs there is a ruling contrast between wisdom and folly. It is important for the student of the Bible to come to understand the terms used. It is the purpose of this paper to define the different words used for wisdom and folly, and then to sketch the method by which Proverbs would lead the student to wisdom.

### THE WISE (חָכָם; hakam)

Wisdom is best seen in Proverbs as it is lived out by the wise person in his character and relationships.

#### I. HIS CHARACTER

##### A. He is godly

1. He fears the Lord. Job 28:28; Psalms 111:10; 94:7-8; Prov. 1:7; 2:5; 4:7; 9:10; 15:33; 28:5, 28; 30:2
2. He trusts the Lord. Prov. 3:5-6
3. He is righteous. Psalms 10:31; 32:9; 37:30; Prov. 2:5; 28:7; Isaiah 27:11
4. He meditates on God's Word. Deut. 4:6; Psalm 37:30-31
5. He is obedient. I Chron. 22:12; Hos. 14:9
6. He hates evil. Job 28:28; Prov. 8:13
7. He engages in moral reflection. Prov. 14:8
8. He is controlled by the knowledge of God. Psalm 107:43; Prov. 9:10
9. He can discern right and wrong. I Kings 3:9, 11; Psalm 19:13; 92:7; Heb. 5:14.
10. He is just. Job 32:9; Prov. 2:9; 28:5; 29:7

##### B. He is teachable.

1. He is humble and modest. Prov. 11:2
2. He is committed to a life of learning wisdom. Prov. 17:24; 18:15
3. He has no false self-confidence. Prov. 28:26
4. He is submissive. (cooperative) Prov. 9:8; 10:8
5. He values advice. Prov. 13:10; 12:15
6. He welcomes instruction. Prov. 9:9; 21:11
7. He values rebuke. Prov. 9:8; 17:10

##### C. He is self-controlled.

1. He is able to concentrate. Prov. 2:2
2. He can control his tongue. Job 13:5; Prov. 10:14, 19; 12:18; 13:3; 14:3; 15:28; 17: 27-28; James 3:3

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 3. He has mastered his temper.                                            | Prov. 16:32; 29:11                   |
| 4. He is thrifty.                                                         | Prov. 21:20                          |
| 5. He is orderly and disciplined.                                         | Prov. 28:2; 30:27                    |
| 6. He can keep a secret.                                                  | Prov. 10:14                          |
| <b>D. <u>He is prudent.</u></b>                                           |                                      |
| 1. He is resourceful.                                                     | Prov. 8:5,12; 30:28                  |
| 2. He is discerning.                                                      | Prov. 2:5; 10:13; 28:5; I Cor. 2:15  |
| 3. He is cautious.                                                        | Prov. 14:16                          |
| 4. He is perceptive.                                                      | Prov. 16:21                          |
| 5. He is discriminative. (bad, good, better, best)                        | Psalm 19:13; 92:7; I Kings. 3:9, 11  |
| 6. He is not gullible.                                                    | Prov. 14:15                          |
| 7. He lives as one who will give an account<br>Job<br>of his life to God. | Psalm 90:12; Eccl. 12:13-14;<br>4:21 |

## II. HIS RELATIONSHIPS

### A. To the Lord.

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. He fears the Lord.                                           | Psalm 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 4:7;<br>8:13; 9:10; 15:33; 28:28 |
| 2. He learns from God.                                          | Psalm 51:6; Prov. 24:6; Job<br>12:13; 28:12, 20           |
| 3. He stands in covenant relation to God,<br>and so is blessed. | Prov. 3:13                                                |
| 4. He trusts the Lord.                                          | Prov. 3:5-6; 16:3, 20; 18:10;<br>22:19                    |
| 5. He relates all his experience to the Lord.                   | Prov. 3:6                                                 |
| 6. He chooses the Lord's way to wisdom.                         | Prov. 8:10                                                |
| 7. He submits to the Lord's discipline.                         | Prov. 3:11                                                |
| 8. He confesses his sin.                                        | Prov. 28:13                                               |

### B. To his family

- |                                                    |                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. He has a stable home life.                      | Prov. 24:3                           |
| 2. He teaches his son to be wise.                  | Prov. 4:11; 5:1                      |
| 3. He disciplines his children.                    | Prov. 29:15, 17                      |
| 4. He respects his parents.                        | Prov. 17:6; contrast 30:17;<br>20:20 |
| 5. He seeks to bring his parents honor and joy by: |                                      |
| a. being wise                                      | Prov. 10:1; 15:20; 29:3              |
| b. being righteous                                 | Prov. 23:24                          |
| c. being diligent                                  | Prov. 10:5                           |

- |                                                    |                            |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 6. He listens to and obeys his parents.            | Prov. 1:8; 4:1; 23:22      |
| 7. He protects his home.                           | Job 39:17; Prov. 30:26     |
| 8. He appreciates his wife:                        |                            |
| a. as a gift from God                              | Prov. 18:22; 19:14         |
| b. as his crowning joy                             | Prov. 12:4; 31:10          |
| 9. He centers all his affection and desire on her. | Prov. 5:15-20              |
| <b>C. <u>To his friends</u></b>                    |                            |
| 1. He fulfills his obligations.                    | Prov. 3:27-28              |
| 2. He is generous.                                 | Prov. 3:27-28              |
| 3. He strives for peace.                           | Prov. 3:29-30; 16:28; 17:9 |
| 4. He doesn't outstay his welcome.                 | Prov. 25:17; 27:10         |
| 5. He doesn't deceive or mislead.                  | Prov. 16:29; 26:18-19      |
| 6. He is loyal.                                    | Prov. 27:10                |
| 7. He will not co-sign a loan.                     | Prov. 6:1-3                |
| 8. He is friendly.                                 | Prov. 18:24                |
| 9. He refuses gossip.                              | Prov. 17:9                 |

## THE SIMPLE (THE PEŪ, yt i P.)

### THE ORIGINAL OPEN MINDED MAN

The second moral category in the book of Proverbs is the category of "simplicity." The student must not confuse this with the intellectually simple, for this person may be quite intelligent. Rather the simpleton is one who is usually young, who is easily led (he is naive), either into wisdom or into folly.

#### I. HIS CHARACTER

##### A. His moral life

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|----------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. He goes astray                      | Ezek. 45:20   |
| 2. He prefers folly to wisdom.         | Prov. 1:22    |
| 3. He is easily lured into temptation. | Prov. 7:2-23  |
| 4. He is wayward.                      | Prov. 1:32    |
| 5. He is self-satisfied.               | Prov. 1:22    |
| 6. He doesn't like discipline.         | Prov. 1:22-25 |

##### B. His thought life

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|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. He is gullible.                                            | Prov. 14:15      |
| 2. He is imprudent.                                           | Prov. 1:4        |
| 3. He is undiscerning.                                        | Prov. 1:4; 14:15 |
| 4. He lacks sense.                                            | Prov. 7:7        |
| 5. He is incautious.                                          | Prov. 22:3       |
| 6. He is untutored.                                           | Prov. 1:4        |
| 7. He is incapable of seeing the consequences of his actions. | Prov. 22:3       |

## II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS CHARACTER

- A. His waywardness will murder him. Prov. 1:32; 7:22
- B. He will become a fool. Prov. 14:18
- C. He will constantly be in trouble. Prov. 22:3; 27:12

## III. THE CHALLENGE TO THE NAIVE

- A. He must learn wisdom Prov. 8:5
  - 1. from the book of Proverbs Prov. 1:4
  - 2. from the statutes of the Lord. Psalm 19:7
  - 3. from the Word of God. Psalm 119:130
  - 4. by practicing wise behavior. Prov. 9:6
  - 5. by submitting to God. Psalm 116:6
  - 6. by seeing fools punished. Prov. 19:25; 21:11
  - 7. by welcoming discipline and reproof. Prov. 1:23
- B. He must leave his folly. Prov. 1:22
  - 1. by seeing the scorner punished Prov. 19:25
  - 2. by abandoning his simple-minded ways Prov. 9:6

### FOLLY

The naive person who does not submit to discipline will become a fool. The status of folly has three subdivisions, the insensitive fool (the *kesil*), the stubborn, or morally insolent, fool (the *'ewil*), and the stupid fool (the *nabal*). The first of this group, the insensitive fool, has six basic characteristics.

#### THE INSENSITIVE FOOL (THE KESIL, לַיְסִיִּק]

### I. HIS CHARACTER

- A. He is unteachable.
  - 1. He is complacent Prov. 1:32
  - 2. He has no heart for wisdom Prov. 17:16; 18:2
  - 3. He despises wisdom Prov. 23:9; cp. 1:22
  - 4. He can't concentrate on wisdom. Prov. 17:24
  - 5. He relies on his own understanding. Prov. 28:26
  - 6. He hates knowledge. Prov. 1:22
  - 7. He is unable to learn from experience. Prov. 26:11; cp. 15:14
  - 8. He is willfully blind to truth. Eccl. 2:14
  - 9. He is unwilling to discipline himself. Prov. 17:16
  - 10. He doesn't respond even to harsh discipline. Prov. 19:29; 26:3
- B. He abuses speech.
  - 1. He is deceitful. Prov. 10:18
  - 2. He is a slanderer. Prov. 10:18
  - 3. He perverts truth. Prov. 19:1

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 4. He demonstrates his folly by his speech.                                          | Prov. 12:23                   |
| 5. He is inept.                                                                      | Prov. 26:7; 14:7              |
| 6. He is dangerous.                                                                  | Prov. 26:9                    |
| C. <u>He abuses his emotions.</u>                                                    |                               |
| 1. He is marked by strife.                                                           | Prov. 18:6                    |
| 2. He gives his emotions full vent.                                                  | Prov. 29:11                   |
| 3. He is an angry man.                                                               | Eccl. 7:9                     |
| D. <u>He ignores the consequences of his actions.</u>                                |                               |
| E. <u>He is morally deficient.</u>                                                   |                               |
| 1. He enjoys wickedness.                                                             | Prov. 10:23                   |
| 2. He hates repentance.                                                              | Prov. 13:19                   |
| 3. He can't withhold any pleasure from himself.                                      | Prov. 21:20                   |
| 4. He doesn't know when he is sinning.                                               | Eccl. 5:1                     |
| 5. He is lax in paying vows to God.                                                  | Eccl. 5:4                     |
| F. <u>He is disloyal and unreliable.</u>                                             |                               |
| 1. He despises his parents.                                                          | Prov. 15:20                   |
| 2. He is unreliable.                                                                 | Prov. 26:6                    |
| 3. He is lazy.                                                                       | Eccl. 4:5                     |
| II. <u>THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS CHARACTER</u>                                         |                               |
| A. <u>He will be punished.</u>                                                       | Prov. 19:29; 26:3; cp. 10:13. |
| B. <u>He will suffer shame.</u>                                                      | Prov. 3:35                    |
| C. <u>His complacency will destroy him.</u>                                          | Prov. 1:32                    |
| D. <u>He causes harm to others.</u>                                                  |                               |
| 1. to his parents                                                                    | Prov. 19:13; 17:21, 25        |
| 2. to his friends                                                                    | Prov. 13:20                   |
| 3. to his employer                                                                   | Prov. 26:6, 10                |
| 4. to his society                                                                    | Prov. 26:1                    |
| III. FOR THIS KIND OF PERSON, GROWTH IN WISDOM <u>REQUIRES A RADICAL CONVERSION.</u> |                               |
| Prov. 8:5                                                                            |                               |

THE STUBBORN, OR MORALLY INSOLENT FOOL (THE 'EWIL, l ywIa `)

I. HIS CHARACTER

- |                                       |            |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| A. <u>He is insolent against God.</u> |            |
| 1. He is ignorant of God.             | Jer. 4:22  |
| 2. He mocks at sin.                   | Prov. 14:9 |
| 3. He rejects sacrifice.              | Prov. 14:9 |
| 4. He is enraged at God.              | Prov. 19:3 |
| 5. He is hostile to God.              | Hosea 9:7  |

- B. He is morally insolent.
1. He mocks at sin. Prov. 14:9
  2. He is shrewd to do evil. Jer. 4:22
  3. He is unskilled in doing good. Jer. 4:22
  4. His folly (טִלְוָאִי) itself is sin. Prov. 24:9; 1:7
  5. He can't resist temptation. Prov. 7:22
- C. He is without understanding.
1. He can't discuss anything rationally. Prov. 29:9
  2. He ignores consequences of his deeds. Prov. 7:23
  3. He enjoys folly. Prov. 15:21
  4. He prejudges things. Prov. 18:13
- D. He is a schemer. Prov. 24:9
- E. He is deceitful. Prov. 14:8
- F. He is rebellious. Psalm 107:7
- G. He hotheadedly abuses speech.
1. He is most easily known by his speech. Prov. 17:28
  2. He likes to quarrel. Prov. 20:3
  3. He lashes out when offended. Prov. 12:16
  4. He acts and speaks impetuously. Prov. 13:16
  5. He gets angry quickly. Prov. 14:17, 29
  6. He is impatient. Prov. 12:16; 14:17, 29
- H. He is unteachable.
1. He despises advice. Prov. 12:15
  2. He assumes he is always right. Prov. 12:15
  3. He despises wisdom and discipline. Prov. 1:7
  4. He is incorrigible. Prov. 27:22
  5. He can't learn from experience. Prov. 26:11
  6. He cannot obtain wisdom. Prov. 24:7
- I. This character quality is usually associated with youth. Prov. 22:15
- II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS CHARACTER
- A. He will be a servant to the wise. Prov. 11:29
  - B. He will be punished. Prov. 14:3; 16:22
  - C. He will come to ruin. Prov. 10:8, 10, 14
  - D. He will die because of his lack of judgment. Prov. 10:2
  - E. He hurts himself and others with his words. Prov. 10:14; 14:1
  - F. He will be perverted more and more. Prov. 19:3
- III. PROVERBS HOLDS OUT NO HOPE OF CHANGE FOR HIM.

## THE STUPID FOOL (THE NABAL, לְבָנִי)

### I. HIS CHARACTER

#### A. His speech

1. He speaks nonsense. Isa. 32:6
2. He lies. Ezek. 13:2-3, 6; Job 42:8; Jer. 29:23
3. He speaks without understanding. Job 2:10
4. He cannot speak with excellence. Prov. 17:7

#### B. His spiritual life.

1. He ignores God. Psalm 14:1; 53:1
2. He refuses to worship God. Psalm 14:4
3. He denies God. Psalm 74:18
4. He curses God. Job 2:9-10
5. He speaks error against the Lord. Isa. 32:6; Job 42:8
6. See C., His morality
7. He practices idolatry. Deut. 32:5-6
8. He claims God's leading. Ezek. 13:2-3, 6
9. He transgresses Torah. II Sam. 13:12-13; Judges 20:10
10. He doesn't trust God. Job 2:9-10

#### C. His morality

1. He inclines toward wickedness. Isa. 32:6
2. He practices ungodliness. Isa. 32:6
3. He withholds help from the needy. Isa. 32:6
4. He does not practice what is good. Psalm 14:1
5. He is corrupt. Psalm 14:1-3
6. He breaks covenant. Josh. 7:15; II Sam. 13:12-13
  - a. by adultery Jer. 29:23; Deut. 22:21
  - b. by ignoring the claims of אֱלֹהִים, loyalty/love II Sam. 13:12-13; Jdg. 19:23-24; 20:6,10
7. He seeks only his own pleasure. II Sam. 13:12-13
8. He cannot subordinate his pleasure to the demands of righteousness. II Sam. 13:12-13
9. He seeks luxury. I Sam. 25:36

#### D. His social relations

1. He ignores social convention. Jdg. 20:10; I Sam. 25:25; II Sam. 13:12-13
2. He is worthless. I Sam. 25:25
3. He is untrustworthy. Jer. 29:23
4. He withholds help from the needy. Isa. 32:6; I Sam. 25:25

- 5. He is unwilling to acknowledge a benefit. I Sam. 25:9-16
- 6. He is unthankful. I Sam. 25:9-16
- 7. He returns evil for good. I Sam. 25:21

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS CHARACTER

- A. He grieves his parents. Prov. 17:21
- B. He will die. Deut. 22:21
- C. He cannot be tolerated. Prov. 30:22
- D. He is hated by those who encounter him. I Sam. 25
- E. He causes his associates shame. I Sam. 25
- F. He endangers his associates. I Sam. 25

THE SCORNER (THE LES, ≈ 1 e)

I. HIS CHARACTER

- A. Scoffing is his most basic personal trait ( ^ / x l ; y ven " a ' ). Isa. 28:14, 22
- B. He loves scoffing. Prov. 1:22
- C. He is classed with the ruthless and the wicked. Isa. 29:20; Prov. 9:7, 8
- D. Scoffing is the opposite of humility. It is proud and haughty. Prov. 3:34; cp. Hab. 2:5
- E. He is filled with overweening pride. Prov. 20:1
- F. He does not listen to rebuke ( h r ; [ ; G " ). Prov. 13:1
- G. He hates reproof. Prov. 15:12
- H. He curses anyone who would discipline him. Prov. 9:7, 8
- I. He is contentious and full of shamefulness. Prov. 22:10
- J. He despises God's Word through His ambassador the prophet. Isa. 28:7-14
- K. He inflames others with his unrestrained wrath. Prov. 29:8
- L. He can't find wisdom. Prov. 14:6

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS CHARACTER

- A. He is the ultimate loser from his way of life. Prov. 9:12
- B. Continued mocking brings increased punishment. Isa. 28:22
- C. He will perish in the Day of the Lord. Isa. 29:20; Prov. 3:34; 19:29
- D. He is an abomination to all mankind. Prov. 24:9

III. INSTRUCTION ABOUT SCOFFERS

- A. Shun scoffers. Psalm 1:1
- B. Avoid rebuking scoffers. Prov. 9:8
- C. When he is punished the naive (the *petî*) gains in shrewdness ( 'ormah hm ; r ] [ ; , the ability to



- live life wisely).  
D. Drive out a scoffer.

Prov. 19:25; 21:11  
Prov. 22:10

### THE WAY OF WISDOM

It may now occur to you that you do not wish to follow the path of folly with its end in scoffing and death. Whoever wishes to avoid such an end must follow the path to wisdom and life. BUT, Job asked (28:28), WHERE CAN WISDOM BE FOUND?

To find wisdom one must follow the proper course, for only by the divinely ordained pathway can wisdom be found. It is of first importance that those who seek wisdom be convinced of its value, then they will be willing to pay the price to get it.

#### I. WISDOM IS DESIRABLE

##### A. The Benefits of Finding Wisdom (This is under the Mosaic covenant)

- |                                         |                                        |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1. Its blessings to the wise            | Prov. 3:13                             |
| a. the LORD'S favor                     | Prov. 8:35                             |
| b. life                                 | Prov. 8:18, 35; 3:16, 18, 22;<br>13:14 |
| c. peace                                | Prov. 3:17                             |
| d. happiness                            | Prov. 3:18                             |
| e. security                             | Prov. 1:33; 3:23-26; 4:16              |
| f. wealth                               | Prov. 3:16; 8:18                       |
| g. honor                                | Prov. 3:16, 35; 8:18                   |
| h. power                                | Prov. 8:14; 11:29; 21:22; 24:5         |
| i. healing                              | Prov. 12:18                            |
| j. hope for the future                  | Prov. 24:14                            |
| k. brings the knowledge of God          | Prov. 30:3                             |
| l. opens up the world for understanding | Prov. 28:5                             |
| 2. It brings blessing for others        |                                        |
| a. makes others wise                    | Prov. 13:20                            |
| b. brings stable home life              | Prov. 14:1                             |
| c. edifies others                       | Prov. 15:7                             |
| d. protects others                      | Prov. 16:14; 29:8                      |

##### B. The Value of Wisdom

- |                                                                                         |                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. It is of supreme value.                                                              | Prov. 4:5, 7 (NIV)            |
| 2. It is worth all a person has.                                                        | Prov. 4:7                     |
| 3. It is more precious than gold, silver, pearls,<br>coral, crystal, onyx, or sapphires | Prov. 3:14-15; 8:10-11; 16:16 |

#### II. WISDOM CAN BE FOUND BY THOSE WHO SEEK IT AS GOD PROVIDES IT

##### A. The Answer of Proverbs

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|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Proverbs itself is intended to teach wisdom. | Prov. 1:2 ,5, 6; 9:9; 22:17   |
| 2. It is given by God.                          | Prov. 2:6; Psalm 51:6; 90:12; |

- Job 12:13
3. It requires something of the one who wants it.
    - a. attention and concentration Prov. 2:2
    - b. total commitment of all one's possessions Prov. 4:5, 7
    - c. all of life Prov. 17:24
    - d. an incessant search Prov. 18:15
    - e. obedience Prov. 7:1-4; 28:7
    - f. humility Prov. 11:2
    - g. physical discipline Prov. 29:15
    - h. submission to reproof Prov. 15:31; 29:15
    - i. submission to instruction Prov. 9:9; 10:8; 12:15; 13:1; 21:11
  4. It requires godliness
    - a. It is rooted in the fear of the LORD Prov. 8:13
    - b. The fear of the Lord is the presupposition and first principle of wisdom. Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 30:2; Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10

WISDOM IS GAINED WHEN ONE SEARCHES FOR IT PERSISTENTLY, GREEDILY, AND WITH HARD WORK (PROV. 2:4), WHEN ONE IS AS FAMILIAR WITH IT AS HE IS WITH HIS OWN WIFE AND FAMILY (PROV. 7:4)

#### B. The New Testament's Answer

1. Jesus Christ is the source of Wisdom I Cor. 1:26-30
  - a. Wisdom is from God. I Cor. 1:24, 30; Prov. 8:35
  - b. This wisdom is described as:
    - i. righteousness
    - ii. sanctification
    - iii. redemption
  - c. He is the source because:
    - i. He is truly God, the fullness of Deity. Col. 2:9
    - ii. Therefore, He is the source of all wisdom and knowledge. Col. 2:3
2. The means of acquiring wisdom I Cor. 1:30; cp. 12:12-13
  - a. In Christ, we are: Col. 2:9-13
    - i. made complete
    - ii. given new resurrected life.
  - b. We practice wisdom by progressive sanctification or wise living. Col. 3:5-14
    - i. putting off the old (= folly) Col. 3:5-9
      - a) We have died and must consider

- ourselves dead. :3-5
- b) We are to put aside the old ways,  
because we have put aside the  
old life. :6-9
- ii. putting on the new. Col. 3:10-14
  - a) We have put on the new man.
  - b) We must put on its new ways.

### III. THE APPLICATION

#### A. Similarities

1. The invitation is to all. Prov. 8:1-4; John 7:37-38
2. The issue is one of life and death. Prov. 8:35-36; John 3:36; 14:6
3. The basis is faith. Prov. 3:5-7; John 3:16-18

#### B. Differences

1. Proverbs presents precepts; the NT a person. Prov. 8:32-36; John 3:36
2. Proverbs gives particulars; the NT the  
pattern and power cp. Prov. 8:13, 20; Col. 3:9-11

WISDOM IS SUPREME; THEREFORE GET WISDOM. THOUGH IT COST ALL YOU HAVE, GET UNDERSTANDING (PROV. 4:7).

Great portions of the material on gaining wisdom have been derived from class notes prepared by Professor Donald Glenn, Dallas Theological Seminary.