

Chapter summary – *Chapter ten addresses the issue of being or acting like a fool. The placement of this subject is certainly no mistake. One of the statements that God is clearly saying is, “Don’t be a fool and miss out on all I have said thus far about life! Take heed and you will reap blessings even in this broken world.”*

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IV. In Solomon’s search for an answer to his question, he now tells us how to live for that which exists above the sun, (Ch. 7:1-12:7)

1. SOLOMON DESCRIBES FOR US THE BEST WAY TO BENEFIT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE FROM OUR LIFE UNDER THE SUN, (7:1-12:7)

- 1) Solomon details the real value of wisdom that is from God, (7:1-9:18)**
- 2) Solomon warns us against playing the fool, (10:1-20)**

Every American has the right to make a fool of him or herself if they so desire. But, I fear that too many people are abusing the privilege these days. For example:

Two men were fishing. Their luck was so good they were catching fish as never before. As the sun went down, one fisherman said to the other, “You’d better mark this place.”
When they got to the pier where they were to return the boat they had rented, the first fisherman said to the second, “Did you mark the place?”
“Sure did, I put an X on the side of the boat just over the good spot.”
“Oh, no, how could you be so stupid?” the first fisherman asked. “How do you know that we can get the same boat tomorrow?”

That’s one kind of fool.

On the other hand, **the reason some of us find it difficult to think is that we haven’t had any previous experience.**

That’s another kind of fool.

One last example involves a, **sign in restaurant: “Our customers are always right: sometimes misinformed, inexact, bullheaded, fickle, conniving, inconsiderate, even downright mean spirited, but never wrong.”**

That is a list of multiple kinds of fools.

(1) Fools and foolishness corrupt everything they touch, (1-3)

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📖 INTERPRETATION:

¹ **Dead flies** (as small as they are), **putrefy** (ruin), **the perfumer's** (fragrant), **ointment, and cause it to give off a foul** (putrid), **odor; so** (likewise), **does a little** (seemingly insignificant), **folly** (e.g., the absence or lack of good common sense, or the inability to foresee the consequences of unwise actions until it's too late, or the attitude of one who thinks he can get away with a wrong or something questionable—so does a little foolishness), **to one** (once), **respected for wisdom and honor**, (a life of habitual wisdom is a wonderful and powerful attribute, but it is dreadfully vulnerable to folly).

F APPLICATION:

When William McKinley was President of the United States, he had to make a decision about the appointment of an ambassador to a foreign country. Two candidates were equally qualified, so McKinley searched his mind for some "yardstick" by which he might measure the true character of the men. Later he revealed that the foolish act of unkindness of one of them was the determining factor in his decision. Many years earlier, when McKinley was still a Congressman, he had observed an inconsiderate action by one of the men. He recalled boarding a streetcar at the rush hour and getting the last vacant seat. Soon an elderly woman got on, carrying a heavy clothesbasket. No one got up to offer her a seat, so she walked the length of the car and stood in the aisle, hardly able to keep her balance as the vehicle swayed from side to side. One of the men McKinley was later to consider for ambassador was sitting next to where the woman was standing. Instead of getting up and helping her, he deliberately shifted his newspaper so it would look like he hadn't seen her. When McKinley noticed this, he walked down the aisle, graciously took her basket, and offered her his seat. The man was unaware that anyone was watching, but that one little act of selfishness would later deprive him of perhaps the crowning honor of his lifetime. (Another example would be Nixon and Watergate.)

None of us are immune to this kind of foolishness.

Folly is to the wise man, what Kryptonite is to Superman. It corrupts everything it touches. Through wisdom you can gain a wonderful reputation, but folly is always standing just outside the door, ready to steal it away from you. A very small or even seemingly insignificant thing, can spoil so much previous labor or future potential.

Now let's think on this from a couple of different perspectives.

If a dead fly is removed from the perfume, its value is only diminished; how much it is diminished depends on how quickly the fly is removed. So it is with our reputation. If we act quickly to counteract the foolish act, the damage can be minimized. Some of the ways that

a foolish act can be dealt with are to confess the wrong—admit that it was wrong, repent of the wrong and do the right thing—learn from it—put off the wrong thing and put-on the right thing, ask for forgiveness of the wrong, remember that love over comes a multitude of sin.

The world isn't looking for perfect men and women, but it is looking for those who are moving in that direction.

The second perspective is that if the fly on the other hand, is allowed to remain in the perfume, the damage is irreparable and a new batch must be made. This means that one may need to begin from scratch in rebuilding a new reputation. There are a lot of things that can cause a person not to try to rectify the wrong. Such as, fear in facing up to it, to proud to admit it, ignorance of what you have done, desire to hide it or ignore it hoping that it will go away on its own.

Do either of these perspectives reflect upon any of your actions or thinking? Are there any adjustments that you need to make?

- ² **A wise man's heart** (the control center of one's life),¹ **is at his right hand** (signifying the place of prosperity and good fortune),² **but a fool's heart at his left**, (which signifies at best, the place of limited blessing, and more often than not it signifies disaster or an ill omen).
- ³ **Even when a fool walks along the way** (walks down the street), **he lacks wisdom, and he shows** (advertises by his actions to), **everyone that he is a fool**, (he can't help but expose himself for what he is—You young people see them walking down the hallway at school. Don't be one of them! Don't follow them!).

F APPLICATION:

Two hunters flew deep into the remote backwoods of Canada to hunt elk. Providence was with them and they bagged six elk. The pilot told them the plane could carry only four of the elk out though. "But the plane that carried us out last year was exactly like this one," the hunters protested. "The horsepower was the same, the weather was similar, and we had six elk then." Hearing this, the pilot reluctantly agreed to try. So, they loaded up

¹ Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. Pr 4:23

² (When Jacob blessed Joseph's sons, just before Jacob died, the Scriptures tell us that, "...Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn. Ge 48:14 (Another example is the disciples wanting to sit at Christ's right hand.)

The Scriptures tell us that at the Great White Throne Judgment, that God "...will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left..." Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: Mt 25:33, 41

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and took off, but sure enough, there was insufficient power to climb out of the valley with all that weight and they crashed. As they stumbled from the wreckage, one hunter asked the other if he knew where they were. "Well, I'm not sure," replied the second, "but I think we are about two miles from where we crashed last year."

Albert Einstein once said, "*The difference between genius and stupidity is that genius has its limits.*"

Isn't that great?! There is no limit to our stupidity! There are stupid things that I have done in my life that I laugh now at, but there are other stupid things in my life that I cry over.

Fools don't learn [though], because fools don't listen. To tell a fool to "be sensible" is to waste one's breath. Fools are notorious for their stupidity. "You can identify a fool just by the way he walks down the street!" (v. 3, TLB). There's nothing hidden. When someone is a fool, people know it. Solomon wrote a great deal about fools in another book, the Proverbs. Let me point out just a few:

Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs, rather than a fool in his folly (Prov. 17:12).

Anyone who has ever worked with, gone to school with, or just "hung around" with a fool knows it's safer to run with a mother bear that's been robbed of her cubs than to mess around with a fool. Fools don't think of consequences. [If you are at school and someone asks you to do something and you mention the consequences and they brush them off, you're standing eyeball to eyeball to a fool.] They act out of impulse without even caring what will happen. It's vicious. It's violent to be in close companionship with "a fool in his folly." [You've seen it when you were driving down the road, right? It's down right dangerous out there sometimes.]

There's another proverb that will leave you nodding in agreement.

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

Today, we would say they "run off at the mouth." Have you ever done a Bible study with a group of fools? I call it SYI: "Share Your Ignorance!" Fools come, sit, talk, say nothing (though they fill the evening with words), and then leave. Or maybe just one in the group feels the need to dominate the group with empty talk—he or she just has to give an opinion or throw out an idea. Most of the time it makes little sense and has no significance. Such a setting makes this next proverb meaningful:

A fool's lips bring strife [I like the next phrase], **and his mouth calls for blows** (Prov. 18:6).

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This isn't just great poetry. This isn't just wisdom literature. This is "lifestyle, learn-a-lesson-quick, folks" kind of counsel. There are times that we will be strongly tempted to punch a fool in the kisser, but it would be a waste of our time! In other words, be sensible! Don't waste energy on a fool.

The first section focuses on the individual. This next part moves into the social life. We leave dead flies and ointment, fools, and folly; and we move into the realm of touching other lives. This is where tragedy strikes. If a fool lived alone, it would be bad enough; but the fact is he or she relates to a world. And those ripples that are created by that life are frequently disastrous.³

We have all played the fool at one time or another. Making mistakes does not necessarily mean you are playing the fool though. Even if your mistake is a foolish one, you can take quick action to minimize it. Remember, the world isn't looking for perfect people, it is looking for those going in that direction.

(2) Fools and foolishness spawn disrespect, (4-7)

A note hung on the hot air hand dryer in the restroom at work which said, "Push here for a note from the boss."

- ⁴ **If the spirit** (or temper), **of the ruler** (some authority figure, a boss or teacher for example), **risers against you** (in this case being righteous anger), **do not leave your post** (do not resign from your position or assignment); **for conciliation** (maintaining a calm controlled composure—especially when you are in the wrong), **pacifies great** (huge), **offenses**, (you will be amazed at the healing power that a quiet respectful demeanor possesses—fools will habitually exhibit disrespect towards the person in authority, even when they are in the wrong—often times they will storm disrespectfully off in a huff).
- ⁵ (Another example), **There is an evil** (an affliction), **I have seen under the sun** (in this sin cursed, broken world), **as an error** (a wrong, an offence), **proceeding from** (or committed by), **the ruler**: (this time)
- ⁶ **Folly** (i.e., a fool), **is set** (placed in a position by the foolish ruler), **in great dignity** (the fool is exalted to a station of nobility, of great importance and power, a position which requires proven character, a wise mind and steady nerves), **while the rich** (the capable, the noble, the one who a wise ruler should place in a position of great dignity), **sit in a lowly place**, (under the authority of the fool—in a position that the fool views with disrespect—a position where capable men and women are helpless to do what they know needs to be done. They are kept under the thumb of the fool).

³ Swindoll, Living on the Ragged Edge, pp. 288-299

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7 **I have seen** (with my own eyes, as incredible as it sounds), **servants on horses, while princes walk on the ground like servants**, (the foolish ruler has created a situation that will spawn mutual disrespect that cannot help but undermine his kingdom).

F **APPLICATION:**

We have all seen it, a person gets an important position because of a favor or favoritism in general, rather than by meeting the required qualifications. We see things that make no sense whatsoever. Situations that lower our respect not for a certain important position, but for the person or persons in and overseeing the position. Maybe you have even played the part of the foolish ruler in this area in the past...

In his book Life Sentence, Charles Colson tells of strolling among the ruins where the Roman senate once met. Recalling his feelings, he wrote: "As I stood snapping photographs, my mind flashed back to the Roosevelt Room in the White House, a few steps across a narrow hallway from the President's oval office. At 8 o'clock each morning a dozen of us, the President's senior aides, had gathered around the antique mahogany table; its polished surface reflected the serious, intense expressions of men who believed the destiny of mankind was in their hands."

Colson continues, ""The decisions we must make today,' Henry Kissinger would often say, 'will affect the whole future course of human history.' We believed it. Just as the Roman senators dressed in their flowing togas believed it nearly 2,000 years ago. Yet here sat their once majestic forum in dusty piles of stone and rubble. Would even this much be left of the Roosevelt Room, I wondered, in two centuries, let alone two millennia from now?"

A nation, an organization, nor a family can survive **indefinitely** being ruled by a fool or foolishness. Mutual disrespect will tear it down. The fool will disrespect those who are better qualified for the position, the qualified will disrespect the fool in a position he has no business being in.

Listen to what God tells us in Proverbs:

- To do evil is like sport to a fool, but a man of understanding has wisdom. Pr 10:23 (A fool's foolishness is funny to him. It's a big joke. The wise man cries over and fears what the fool has done, but the fool laughs and continues on doing the same thing over again. The fool hopes to have the same effect next **time as he did the time before! It's a game to him!**)
- He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed. Pr 13:20 (The wise are like sunshine and rain together, **they compliment each other. But** fools are like fire and gasoline. **They are a deadly combination! The wise promote health and well-being, but the fools promote disrespect and destruction.**)
- **He who sends a message by the hand of a fool cuts off his own feet and drinks violence. Pr 26:6 (It's a sign of insanity. It all but guarantees the failure or death of your organization or plan. It poi-**

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sons all your previous careful planning and hard work. It flushes it right down the toilet. Like you will do to your reputation if you hang around a fool.)

- Like one who binds a stone in a sling is he who gives honor to a fool. Pr 26:8 (It will taint your reputation, doing something so stupid. It will most certainly bring you more harm than good.)

c If you are not qualified for a position, don't seek it or accept it without the proper training to become qualified.

c If you must fill a position, be sure the person is not only qualified, but the best person for the position. Resist the temptation to do a favor for someone or exercise personal favoritism in placing someone in the position who is not the best person to fill it.

c If you are in a position and become disqualified or disenchanted, step down voluntarily.

c Make decisions that protect not only the dignity of the position, but the respect of the person/s fulfilling the position, as well as those who are served through it.

1 Cor. 1:18-25

There were Sadducees and Pharisees who were in the position of religious leaders that had no business being there. They were fools and they looked upon Christ (who obviously was qualified to be a religious leader), with great disrespect. Christ did not respect them either. They were counterfeit to all that Christ represented.

There have been intelligent men and women, boy and girls since the beginning of time, that have foolishly rejected the gospel of salvation, even mocked it. But, that is between them and the Lord. The real issue is were are you on this matter? What is the gospel of Jesus Christ to you? What does being one of His disciples mean to you? What does Christianity mean to you?

(3) Fools and foolishness injures the fool, as well as innocent bystanders, (8-14)

1a The fool will be injured by his evil deeds, (8)

- ⁸ **He** (the fool), **who digs a pit** (devises a scheme to wreck havoc on someone) **will fall into it** (will eventually be victimized by it in some way himself [Have you ever thought up a plan to do something unpleasant to someone, only to find yourself in serious trouble with your boss, friend, spouse or parents?]), **and whoever breaks through a wall** (in order to try to steal something from someone, or in order to try to let some possession of theirs loose—the fool), **will be bitten by a serpent**, (in the process—it will eventually come back to hurt him in some way).

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F APPLICATION:

“[Fools like this—who do these things on a habitual basis] continue to live their entire, empty lives taking advantage of people—using and abusing them—either not knowing or, worse, not caring that they themselves are the losers in the process.”⁴

From chapters 1-6 God has been describing for us just how miserable this world can be as a result of the curse of sin upon it. It is an utterly broken world we live in. Bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people, as well as vice versa. There is no way to control what happens to you or those you love. Then, from chapter 7 and on, God tells us how to get the most out of this world, even though it is broken. But the fool loses out on how to do this because of his actions and attitudes.

The "Western Messenger" periodical carried a story by Evangelist Joe Boyd. He tells how he met a man with a missing index finger. "How did it happen?" Boyd inquired. "A snake bit me when the stick broke," he replied. "What stick?" asked the preacher. The man then told how he had kept a large 6-foot rattlesnake in a cage as a pet. One day, however, he took it into the living room and released it just to tease his wife. As she fled in terror, he quickly took a stick and placed it behind the reptile's head, holding it firmly to the floor. As the irritated snake writhed and twisted, the man pushed harder to maintain control. Suddenly the crotched limb gave way with a loud crack. As quick as lightning, the rattler arched its back and made its attack. Its deadly fangs, filled with venom, struck the man on the hand. Medical treatment saved his life, but his finger had to be amputated. Evangelist Boyd says, "Sin[ful foolishness] is like that rattlesnake. You can't tease or play with it, for it will never be satisfied until its poison is injected into your [life]."

Young and old alike, think that they can play with sin and not get bit. Well, sooner or later, everyone who plays with sin gets bit.

2a The fool will be injured by his reckless actions, (8-10)

⁹ **He** (the fool), **who quarries stones** (inferring in some reckless way) **may be hurt by them** (may incur some needless personal injury because of his foolishness), **and** (in the same way), **he who** (carelessly), **splits wood may be endangered by it**.

F APPLICATION:

- The fool thinks he can copy someone else's homework and/or test and it won't harm him.
- The fool thinks he can have an affair and he won't get caught.
- The fool thinks he can be sexually active and not get pregnant or catch some sexually transmitted disease.

⁴ Swindoll, "Living on the Ragged Edge," p. 292

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- The fool thinks he can play around with pornography, drugs, alcohol, etc., and he wont become addicted or do something shameful.
- The fool thinks he can drive recklessly and not get hurt or hurt someone else.
- The fool thinks he can spend more money than he makes and not get into a financial crisis.
- The fool thinks he can put his spouse, children, or friend down all the time and not think he will hurt his relationship.

These are just some of the reckless actions of a fool that severally injure him.

¹⁰ (For example), **if the ax is dull, and one does not sharpen the edge, then he** (foolishly), **must use more strength** (than the job would require); **but wisdom** (not foolishness), **brings success** (the wise person doesn't work harder and thus more dangerously and laboriously; he works smarter and thus safer and effectively).⁵

F APPLICATION:

William Ezell tells the story of two lumberjacks, "a younger one and an older one, [who] raced to see who could cut down the most trees in a single day. At the end of the day the winner was obvious. The older lumberjack had won. The younger man could not believe it!

"How could you have cut down more trees than I did?" he asked. 'Every hour you sat down while I kept right on cutting. I don't understand. How could you have cut more trees while sitting so much?'

"When I sat down, I was sharpening my axe,' the older lumberjack said. 'Why didn't you stop to sharpen your axe?'

"I didn't have time,' the younger man said. 'I was too busy cutting.'

"To be an effective [and successful] servant, to make my life count for Christ, I need to [be wise and] take time regularly to 'sharpen' my life."

[Decision, Jan 1994. Page 15.]

To sharpen our lives we must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We must be increasingly transformed into His image and not conformed to the ways of this world. Wisdom brings success.

If you went to the library or to the bookstore, how many books do you think you would find on the subject of how to be successful at something? Hundreds, probably. If you turn the TV on in the early

⁵ The wise person vs. the fool:

- The wise person will accomplish far more good by the end of the day than the fool.
- The wise person will find far more satisfaction in life and experience more general well-being in life than the fool.
- The wise person will experience far less self-inflicted personal injury in life than the fool.

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morning hours, what will more than likely be on? How to be successful at making a million dollars, how to be successful at losing a million pounds or how to be successful at building a million hulk like muscles.

God says though, that **wisdom**, will bring success. Not intelligence, wealth, influential friends, bribes, brute force or prestigious degrees. Exercising wisdom on a habitual basis, will prosper you. Charles Swindoll writes in his book, Living on the Ragged Edge:

It may not give us great popularity and wealth and it may not mean that we will be the most respected in our fields or that we will have the most significant voice in the company, but ultimately, as God gauges it, we will be successful. Wisdom will give us discernment, perception, insight, intuition, and especially the ability to sense danger ahead of time...⁶

We must understand though, that exercising this kind of wisdom does not just come naturally. Proverbs 2:1-5 depicts this truth well.

¹ My son,

if (conditional clause), you receive my words, **and** treasure my commands within you, ² **So that** you incline your ear to wisdom, **and** apply your heart to understanding; ³ Yes,

if you cry out for discernment, **and** lift up your voice for understanding,

⁴ **if** you seek her as silver, **and** search for her as for hidden treasures;

⁵ **Then** (after you meet these conditions), you will understand the fear of the Lord (which is the beginning of wisdom), and find the knowledge of God. Pr 2:1-5

The kind of wisdom that brings success, involves teamwork. It requires your working hand and hand with God. God is willing to do His part, if you are willing to do yours. Hoping that God will just give you success without working for it is pure fantasy. To think you can have real, lasting and fulfilling success without God is just as big a delusion. It requires you and God to work hard and faithfully together. Wisdom brings success and you will be a person of wisdom "if"...

3a The fool will be injured by his bad timing, (11a)

¹¹ **A serpent may bite when it is not charmed** (i.e., a fool may have the skill required to do a job, but if he doesn't know the right timing to apply those skills, he ends up injuring himself anyways);

F APPLICATION:

When climbing some of the mountains in the Adirondacks, it is sometimes necessary to climb some ledges. They are not generally to high,

⁶ p. 293

usually between 8 to 16 feet, but you still have to be careful. I know how to climb them, but sometimes that is not enough. At times timing is equally or even more important. When I was climbing Little Haystack and Haystack Mt., there were wind gusts that I guessed to be between 50 to 60 mph. There were a few times that I had to get down on my hands and knees to keep from being blown down. There were several ledges that I had to climb to get over these mountains and down the other side. Sometimes I would wait along time before I thought it was safe to climb one of these ledges because of the wind. I didn't want to be like the fly on the car windshield that is blown off at 50 mph. Knowing how to climb the ledges was not a problem, but the wisdom to know when to climb them was the issue that would bring success or disaster

4a The fool will be injured by his inappropriate words, (11b-14)

In Vermont, a farmer was sitting on the porch with his wife. He was beginning to realize how much she meant to him. It was about time—for they had been married for forty-two years. And she had been such a blessing to him.

One day as they sat together, he said, “Wife, you’ve been such a wonderful woman that there are times I can hardly keep from telling you.”

That man used a few badly chosen words that I am sure brought him some measure of injury.

1b He has an inability to use his words to his advantage, (11b)

the babbler (lit. is “*the master of the tongue*” a slick talker we call him today—but like the snake charmer, he), **is no different** (he has the skill, but not the wisdom to apply it to his best advantage).

2b He is not careful about what he says, (12)

¹² **The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious** (they are pleasant, coveted, benevolent, and the idea here is that his gracious words thereby win him favor with God and man), **but the lips of a fool** (on the other hand—because they are unpleasant, hated and uncaring—his words), **shall swallow him up** (they shall consume him—they will come back to haunt him—the fool will bring about his own demise with his words);⁷

⁷ In the mouth of a fool is a rod of pride (pride comes before a fall), but the lips of the wise will preserve them, (keep them from falling). Pr 14:3

A fool’s mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul. Pr 18:7 (How many times has your mouth gotten you into trouble?)

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3b He loses control in his conversations, (13)

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¹³ **The words of his mouth begin with foolishness** (e.g., in the form of arrogance, wickedness, selfishness, or stupidity [**They say that nowadays, whatever is not worth saying is sung**. Well, if that the case the fool does a lot of singing.]), **and the end of his talk is raving madness**, (total insanity—from start to finish his words are useless, but they generally get worse the longer he or she goes—“He worked himself up into a frenzy,” we would say today.⁸ This is the kind of person we would be constantly saying, “Calm down,” or “Chill out,” to).

4b He describes himself as a know-it-all, (14)

(Don't you just love a know-it-all?! **There are two kinds of fools in this area, those who can't change their opinions, and those who won't.**)

¹⁴ **A fool also multiplies words**, (there is no end to their words, but they never say a single thing—he or she goes on and on and on, proudly proclaiming his or her folly).⁹ **No man knows what is to be** (no one knows what the future holds; especially a fool!); **who can tell** (foretell, guarantee), **him what will be after him?** (No one.)

F APPLICATION:

Now God just gave us four things we can learn from the fool who injures himself. Did you catch them?

- ç You may be a slick-talking-Willy, a silver tongued fox, but if you don't possess and exercise God's wisdom, you'll not be able to use your words to your advantage.
- ç You may be proud that you tell people just what you think and how you feel, but if you don't possess and exercise God's wisdom, your words will consume any benefit you hoped to gain by them.
- ç You may be able to talk with great enthusiasm and charisma, but if you don't possess and exercise God's wisdom, that's the only value your conversation will provide—enthusiasm—and even that will eventually become overbearing.
- ç You may claim to be some kind of authority, but if you don't possess and exercise God's wisdom, you are really living a delusion and everyone will know it but you.

Those are some pretty serious matters that can greatly affect your life and the lives of those around you. Don't injure yourself in these ways.

⁸ Have you ever seen that happen? It's not a pretty sight. It's downright scary at times. The person gets all red faced, veins bulging, chest pounding, (as well as yours), and beads of perspiration collecting on their forehead.

⁹ **Normally when a person finds himself in deep water, he figures out pretty fast that it's a good idea to keep his mouth shut.** Not the fool though.

**(4) Fools and foolishness undermines ones labor,
(15-20)**

**1a The fool spins his wheels but goes nowhere,
(15)**

¹⁵ **The labor** (enterprises), **of fools wearies** (exhausts), **them** (they wear themselves out having to spend several times the amount of normal time it would take to accomplish a project, or because of constant fruitless or unfinished pursuits), **for they do not even know how to go to the city!** (This is a proverb that depicts the fool as being ignorant of even the most everyday matters of life—Keep in mind that this has nothing to do with their IQ—It’s all about how they use what they have, however much or little that may be. It has nothing to do with sex, culture or age either. **It has been said though, that you never heard of a woman making a fool out of a man without a lot of cooperation.**)

2a The fool labors for his own self-interest rather than others, (16)

¹⁶ **Woe** (is un)to you, **O land** (O kingdom), **when your king** (your leader), **is a child** (i.e., one who thinks, acts and responds like a child—one who is woefully unqualified, unfit for the task of ruling a kingdom), **and** (if that were not enough), **your princes** (the kings administrators), **feast in the morning**, (we are not talking about eating a big breakfast here. They are drunken party animals [v. 17] rather than clear-headed administrators and guardians of justice and peace—they are servants of their passions rather than servants of the people! This is the opposite of what God wants us to be and He says so in the next verse.)

¹⁷ (But, in contrast to the foolish king), **Blessed** (happy, fortunate), **are you, O land** (kingdom), **when your king is the son of nobles** (by heritage as well as in practice), **and your princes feast at the proper time—for strength** (to sustain their body and to do their job), **and not for drunkenness** (to satisfy their body and to fulfill their lusts! They eat to live, rather than live to eat.)¹⁰

¹⁸ **Because of** (a fools), **laziness the building decays** (it begins to sag, it becomes rundown—as will anything that is put under the fools watch care, like the kings kingdom), **and through** (his), **idleness of hands the house leaks**, (he won’t even do anything when it literally rains inside the house—or when his kingdom is all but in shambles).

¹⁹ (All that the foolish king and his princes care about is that) **A feast is made for laughter** (partying), **and wine makes merry** (it causes one to forget about his or her problems); **but money answers everything**, (money is the answer to everything to the fool—he thinks it will buy him whatever he wants or needs).

¹⁰ It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink; lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted. (Pr 31:4-5)

F APPLICATION:

We now have a few more identifiable earmarks of a fool.

1. The fool is a great procrastinator. "I'll do it in a minute, or later today, or tomorrow," he tells you. "I thought you were going to do that," he says. "I'm sorry, I forgot," has been said so many times it means nothing to you.
2. The fool spends the vast majority of his time on the unimportant or insignificant matters of life. He likes to spend his time on things that entertain him; that amuse him; that serve him; that inflates his ego; that feeds his physical passions; that require nothing or very little from him.
3. The fool is easily distracted from his responsibilities. The roof can be literally leaking over him, and his only concern is if they remembered to get some glazed donuts this time. His favorite hangouts are the break room, the restroom and the chat room.
4. The fool thinks that money is the cure for all evil. He is a man that believes that anything can be gotten from anyone for the right price. He believes that money can solve all of life's problems. He believes that money can satisfy all of life's desires. Money is his god. **Fools sometimes make money, but money also sometimes makes fools.**

²⁰ **Do not curse** (bad mouth, trash talk), **the king** (though, which you will be tempted to do if he is a fool—don't curse him), **even in your thought** (because thoughts are too easily consciously and unconsciously expressed—you may slip in an unguarded moment); **do not curse the rich** (the foolish princes), **even in your bedroom** (even were you think you are most secure); **for a bird of the air** (some unknown source), **may carry your voice** (repeat what you said), **and a bird in flight may tell the matter**, (to the king or prince—Don't say or think anything you wouldn't want repeated).

F APPLICATION:

Have you ever had a brother, or sister, a trusted spouse, or a so-called friend tell someone something that you told them in strict confidence? It's infuriating, horrifying and humiliating all at the same time.

Randy experienced this when his sister let out one of his little secrets. He said to his sister, "I thought I told you not to tell Mom how late I came in last night."

To which Marie replied, "I didn't tell her--I just said that I was too busy setting the breakfast table to notice the time."

Your definition of a secret is not always someone else's! To some people a secret is something you tell one person at a time.

God is giving us some tremendous counsel here! He says that we should not express or even think bad things about fools, because it will in some way be repeated to the fool or somehow be communicated to him by our mouth, actions or attitudes. Then, there is going to be war!

If you think it's hard to deal with or live with a fool, wait until the fool finds out you've been talking about him! Wait until your face is the bull's-eye on his dart board. Wait until you're the object of his or her wrath. It is hell on earth! Count on it, the fool will retaliate and will come at you with both barrels blazing! Let's accept Solomon's warning. Fools can be dangerous to your health. Confidentiality is sometimes a matter of survival.¹¹

God gives great advice on what to do when you find yourself around a fool. Do you know what it is? The best advice God gives us when we come into contact with a fool is to run. **“Leave the presence of a fool,”** God says, **“or you will not discern words of knowledge.”** (NASV, Pr 14:7) This verse not only tells us that the fool will have no words of wisdom, but it also implies that the one listening to the fool will begin to speak and act like the fool.

Isn't that interesting? Our thinking will break down if we stay in the presence of and try to do verbal battle with a fool. If we try to outsmart a fool, outtrick a fool, outfight a fool, or outtalk a fool, we will lose! We will lose clear thinking. We will begin to lack true knowledge. We will lose the discernment of understanding. “Leave the presence of a fool...”¹² [It is impossible to defeat an ignorant and arrogant person in an argument. There is no basis upon which you can build your case. You are always going to be wrong and that's that.]

You know Proverbs 14:7 is true because you have seen it happen and probably have done it yourself. You started to return the same kind of verbal abuse at the fool that you were receiving. You started to mimic the actions and attitudes of the fool that he was directing towards you. Maybe you even started throwing things or got physical in some way. It is very possible that you even did or said foolish things that the fool himself was not doing or saying. Your encounter could become so brutal that if someone innocently came upon the two of you in the midst of your conflict, it would probably be easy for him to say to himself, “There are a couple of fools.” **You see sometimes when we argue with a fool, he is doing the same thing.**

God says to get away from a fool, before you start acting like him.

¹¹ Swindoll, *Living on the Ragged Edge*, p. 308

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 309

 **INTERPRETATION:**

F APPLICATION:

 **COMMENTARY:**