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FOCUSED ON THE WORD

Twelve Indicators of Foolishness in Office



Ship of Fools, Hieronymus Bosch, 1490–1500, The Louvre

The Word of God emphatically states that there is no place for **fools** or **foolishness** among those who are involved in the formation of public policy. Scripture repeatedly makes it clear in the book of Proverbs primarily, as well as in many other books, that we should avoid **foolish** behavior and **foolish** friends, for **foolishness** leads to faulty thinking, disastrous outcomes, and

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The views expressed in each Bible Study are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study sponsor.

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

White House Cabinet and Governors: Wednesdays 8am (EST), light breakfast served

Senate Members: Tuesdays 8am, rotating offices, hot breakfast served

House Members: Thursdays 8am, Natural Resources, Longworth 1334, hot breakfast served



MINISTRY UPDATE

Congressman Nathaniel Moran on the Power of God's Word in Government



At Capitol Ministries, we believe that consistent, in-depth study of God's Word is essential for transforming hearts and guiding those in positions of influence. Since 2010, we have faithfully taught the Bible each week to Members of the U.S. House of Representatives—making disciples in the heart of our nation's government.

"In my estimation, people in ministry who are not committed to regularly teaching God's Word year-round are missing the mark," asserts Ralph Drollinger, Founder and President of Capitol Ministries. "For more than 29 years—and with the benefit of seminary training—I have been dedicated to continually refining written Bible studies for public servants. It is an honor to travel to D.C.

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ruination. Most importantly, in the life of believers, *foolish* behavior should be overcome through the study of Scripture and by listening to and obeying the Holy Spirit's quiet voice of correction when we go astray.

Often, we become so accustomed to our way of thinking, doing things, speaking, and the habits of our behavior that we don't even recognize that our actions and responses are *foolish* and, as such, are sin. This failure to recognize the problem points to the need to become increasingly sensitive to what the Bible says is *foolish*.

In this study, "Twelve Indicators of *Foolishness* in Office," we look at what God's Word says about *fools* and *foolish* behavior. I suggest you read this study carefully to see if you recognize any of these deadly signs in yourself. There may very well be an opportunity for character building—increasing in Christlikeness—an opportunity to see yourself through the lens of Scripture, and, consequently, the opportunity to work to jettison some of these negative traits and replace them with ones that are pleasing to God.

Read on, my friend!

Ralph Drollinger

I. INTRODUCTION

In this study we will examine all Solomon said about *foolishness* in the Old Testament (OT) book of Proverbs. The Hebrew word for *fool* (*kesil*) basically means "a stupid fellow." According to *Merriam-Webster*, a *fool* is "marked by or resulting from dullness or unintelligent thinking; senselessness."

**In the context of Proverbs,
fools are those who
reject the counsel of
God, which makes their
thinking unintelligent and
subsequent decisions poor.**

Said another way, because *fools* reject God's knowledge, they lack skill in making right choices in life. As a result, they end up reaping what they've sown.

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God" (Psalm 14:1). Even though Romans 1:19 states, *because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them*, a *fool* suppresses and attempts to deny that intellectual understanding. Such a suppression of inner circuitry, as installed by the Creator Himself, is evidence of stupidity—a will of resistance to doing what is right. Throughout our study



of Proverbs, we will see this often and simple contrast between the one who acknowledges what is right and the one who does not.

In this study, a qualifying note is important up front. A *foolish* person is not necessarily in parallel to an unbeliever or a Christian. Some believers, in their spiritual immaturity, act *foolishly* more often than wisely. And many unbelievers live according to biblical precepts even though they have never bowed the knee to Christ's Lordship. They are to some degree adept at living life (as they borrow without accreditation) based on God's handbook on how to live skillfully. This distinction will become important in terms of later lesson applications.

Let us begin in the first chapter of Proverbs, where wisdom is personified in the literary style of Solomon.

Wisdom shouts in the street, she lifts her voice in the square; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings: "How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing and fools hate knowledge? Turn to my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention; and you neglected all my counsel and did not want my reproof; I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes, when your dread comes like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will

call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but they will not find me, because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof. So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be satiated with their own devices. For the waywardness of the naive will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them. But he who listens to me shall live securely and will be at ease from the dread of evil" (1:20–33).

In this lengthy passage, dire consequences come to those who reject wisdom and live *foolishly*. The stark contrasting features between the two can be further highlighted in the following three Proverbs.

Fools despise wisdom and instruction (1:7).

"O fools, understand wisdom" (8:5).

Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool, and so is wisdom to a man of understanding (10:23).

Accordingly, seeking the knowledge of God and His understanding on matters is the difference between night and day, foolishness versus wisdom.

It follows that Proverbs admonishes us to abandon *foolishness*:

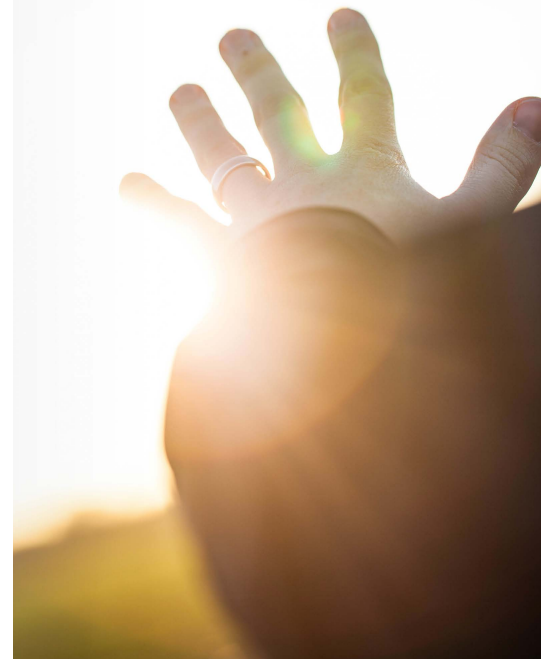
"Forsake your folly and live, and proceed in the way of understanding" (9:6).

VERSE OF THE WEEK

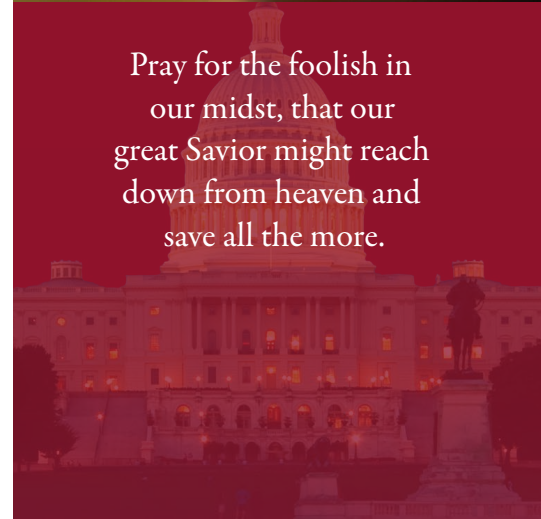


1 Corinthians 6:11

Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.



Pray for the foolish in our midst, that our great Savior might reach down from heaven and save all the more.





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almost every week Congress is in session and provide studies that offer both depth and practical application for these busy, influential leaders.”

This month, we had the honor to interview Congressman Nathaniel Moran (TX-01), a committed participant in our Washington, D.C., Bible study, and hear how God is using His Word to impact leaders on Capitol Hill.

“The Bible study has definitely strengthened my personal faith journey,” Congressman Moran shared. “It encourages me to stay rooted in the Bible while serving as a Member of Congress. It provides clarity on how to apply God’s Word—both in the decisions we make and in how we are to conduct ourselves as public servants.”

He emphasized the vital role Capitol Ministries plays in government today. “As we are frequently reminded in the Bible study by Ralph, the institution of government was ordained by God to serve a specific purpose on this earth. I think it’s critical that we understand that purpose and keep government focused solely on it. Rather than creating new institutions to replace God-ordained ones—like the family, church, or institutions of commerce—government should serve to empower those institutions to fulfill their

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Folly (*pethi*), which is akin to *foolishness*, means “simple or open-minded” in the sense that the absolutes of Scripture are superseded by our own thinking (cf. Proverbs 28:26). Solomon commands that we need to *forsake* the belief that truth is derived from self and instead seek the *understanding* of God as revealed in His Book.

**How wise of a person—
measurably speaking—
are you? Conversely,
how foolish are you?**

What follows are 12 biblical indicators of *foolishness* by which to weigh yourself. What *foolish* behaviors will you cast off today because of this Bible study?

II. TWELVE INDICATORS OF FOOLISH BEHAVIOR

A. IT’S FOOLISH TO DISHONOR PARENTS

The Scripture speaks about always honoring our parents: it is the sixth of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:12; cf. Ephesians 6:2). The Hebrew word for *honor* (*kabab*) has the idea of “weighing heavily.” Those who do not possess such an attitude of respect and nobility are categorized by the following Proverbs as *fools*.

The wise will inherit honor, but fools display dishonor (3:35).

A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother (10:1).

A wise son accepts his father’s discipline, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke (13:1).

A fool rejects his father’s discipline, but he who regards reproof is sensible (15:5).

A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother (15:20).

He who sires a fool does so to his sorrow, and the father of a fool has no joy (17:21).

A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him (17:25).

A foolish son is destruction to his father, and the contentions of a wife are a constant dripping (19:13).

Conclusively, those who disrespect their parents in any way are classified biblically as *fools*. Are you *foolish* on this count?

B. IT’S FOOLISH TO GO ASTRAY

He will die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he will go astray (Proverbs 5:23).

Those who refuse God’s instruction via the clear precepts of His Word or, per this passage, its amplification through His pastor-teachers (legitimate teachers whom He has given to His Church per Ephesians 4:11–12) end up wandering from righteousness in this life. “Committing errors” is the literal Hebrew translation for *astray*.

People who reject the authority of Scripture have no firm foundation or



rudder for living; as a result, they are adrift at sea, blown by the winds of a fallen world, astray in life.

Such states the wisest man to ever live. Judges 17:6 echoes this idea wherein it says of Israel *every man did what was right in his own eyes*. Are you *astray* in life? Such is indicative of a *fool*.

C. IT'S FOOLISH TO COMMIT SEXUAL SIN

Suddenly he follows her as an ox goes to the slaughter (Proverbs 7:22).

The woman of folly is boisterous, she is naive and knows nothing. She sits at the doorway of her house, on a seat by the high places of the city, calling to those who pass by, who are making their paths straight: "Whoever is naive, let him turn in here," and to him who lacks understanding she says, "Stolen water is sweet; and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol (9:13–18).

In polite euphemistic language, Solomon stated that the sin of adultery is evidence of *foolishness*. Committing adultery and destroying the trust and respect of your spouse—as well as the security and wellbeing of your children is *foolhardy*. How stupid to trade away all that for a moment in time!

D. IT'S FOOLISH TO REJECT CORRECTION

Proverbs uses the term *understanding* to describe those who are teachable from God's Word—those who are open to being corrected by it, who desire growth and conformation, and

those who want to increase in discernment (cf. Romans 12:1–2). *Fools* are just the opposite in attitude.

He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself, and he who reproves a wicked man gets insults for himself (Proverbs 9:7).

Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, reprove a wise man and he will love you (9:8).

The wise of heart will receive commands, but a babbling fool will be ruined (10:8).

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel (12:15).

Fools mock at sin, but among the upright there is good will (14:9).

A scoffer does not love one who reproves him, he will not go to the wise (15:12).

A rebuke goes deeper into one who has understanding than a hundred blows into a fool (17:10).

Are you self-absorbed—closed off to discerning God's will in your life? The degree to which you are is the degree to which you are *foolish*.

Develop an attitude of want and desire for God's truth. You will gain discernment and skill at living life throughout the course of your life.

E. IT'S FOOLISH TO MOUTH OFF

Many times in my ministry, I have encountered people who have a problem with swearing. That matter, how-

God-ordained purposes, not to plant or constrain them."

When asked what he would say to a colleague hesitant to join a Bible study, Congressman Moran replied, "Our priorities and our 'treasure'—are known by where we spend our time, energy, and money. If maintaining a strong relationship with Christ is truly a priority, that should be reflected in our calendars, in the time we spend daily and weekly in His Word. This Bible study is a perfect opportunity to do that."

We went on to ask what makes the Capitol Ministries Bible study so unique? "The spiritual depth," Congressman Moran said. "The material doesn't bend to cultural whims, and its clear application to our roles as elected officials—that is what sets this Bible Study apart from others. It doesn't water down God's truth, and it's certainly not apologetic in its call for serving in a manner consistent with the truth of Jesus Christ."

As Capitol Ministries continues to disciple leaders in D.C. and in state capitals across America, we remain steadfast in our mission: to teach the Bible to political leaders and make disciples of Jesus Christ in the halls of government across the world.

"I encourage my colleagues to prioritize consistent fellowship with other believers and the study of God's Word by attending Capitol Ministries' weekly Bible study," Congressman Moran concluded.



MINISTRY LEADER PROFILE

Ross Harmon

State Ministry Leader
Iowa



As Capitol Ministries' ministry leader in Iowa, Dr. Ross Harmon is devoted to teaching of God's Word at the state Capitol. In alignment with the mission of Capitol Ministries, he is determined to leave politics to the politicians and focus on drawing leaders in the state Capitol closer to Jesus Christ.

"The idea of mending the soul before mending the state is something that appeals to me," he said. "I think that's such an attainable goal because that's the Holy Spirit's work."

Dr. Harmon successfully completed the required training at the fall 2023 Recruiting and Training Conference in Washington, D.C., and began his ministry to public servants.

Dr. Harmon is an army veteran. He earned a doctorate

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ever, is only one among a plethora of *foolish* vocal cord exercises. Since the mouth of public servants is central to their vocation, this point is deserving of extra ink. (It could be a Bible study alone in its own right.)

Do you know at least eight ways you can be foolish with your tongue?

Be sensitive to how each of these practices can be classified as *foolish*:

1. Voluminous talking

He who winks the eye causes trouble, and a babbling fool will be ruined (Proverbs 10:10).

Wise men store up knowledge, but with the mouth of the foolish, ruin is at hand (10:14).

Wisdom rests in the heart of one who has understanding, but in the hearts of fools it is made known (14:33).

Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is considered prudent (17:28).

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

Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him (29:20).

2. Slandering others

He who conceals hatred has lying lips, and he who spreads slander is a fool (Proverbs 10:18).

Slander is a prolific, deadly poison that wafts in the hallways on the Hill: utterances of false charges and misrepresentations which defame and damage reputations. Don't let it be a part of your verbal discourse.

3. Gibberish

Gibberish is "unintelligible or meaningless language" (*Merriam-Webster*). Notice the following biblical words that are used to underscore the presence of this speech pattern.

A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims folly (Proverbs 12:23).

Every prudent man acts with knowledge, but a fool displays folly (13:16).

The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, but the mouth of fools spouts folly (15:2).

Leave the presence of a fool, or you will not discern words of knowledge (14:7).

The lips of the wise spread knowledge, but the hearts of fools are not so (15:7).

In each of these Proverbs, there is a contrast between *knowledge* and *folly*. Folly is the characteristic speech of what Proverbs identifies as a simpleton.

Don't use your mouth to vocalize matters of unimportance. Let your speech be filled with scriptural, eternal truths



and matters of substance that bring glory to your Creator (cf. Ephesians 5:19) and acumen to your profession. May your speech be substantive.

4. Destructive comments

In the mouth of the foolish is a rod for his back, but the lips of the wise will protect them (Proverbs 14:3).

The devising of folly is sin, and the scoffer is an abomination to men (24:9).

Boastful, rash, intemperate speech vividly portrays a haughty spirit that stems from the enunciations of **foolish** people. Does your speech land you into difficulty?

5. Misleading statements

The wisdom of the sensible is to understand his way, but the foolishness of fools is deceit (Proverbs 14:8).

Excellent speech is not fitting for a fool, much less are lying lips to a prince (17:7).

Deceit and **lying** are indicative of a heart bent on the practice of delusion or fraud.

6. Argumentative speech

A fool's lips bring strife, and his mouth calls for blows. A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are the snare of his soul (Proverbs 18:6–7).

Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, but any fool will quarrel (20:3).

This kind of person is like a tennis player who comes to the net every play. The dialogue is not very enjoyable.

7. Talking over others

He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him (Proverbs 18:13).

Some folks speak before you've made your point. Still others listen and are thinking, but they lack patience to wait until it is their turn to speak. This is a very common bad habit.

8. Swearing

Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than he who is perverse in speech and is a fool (Proverbs 19:1).

Beloved, which of these sins of the tongue categorize you as a **fool**? Memorize and meditate on appropriate proverbs. Drive **foolishness** from your speech. Discipline your mouth (Cf. James 3:1–12).

F. IT'S FOOLISH TO REJECT DISCIPLINE

He who troubles his own house will inherit wind, and the foolish will be servant to the wisehearted (Proverbs 11:29).

Why is there a price in the hand of a fool to buy wisdom, when he has no sense? (17:16).

The point of the aforementioned Proverb is that a **fool** cannot even purchase wisdom because he doesn't sense a need for it in the first place. Do you need the constant discipline of another

in Biblical studies from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary where he now teaches an Old Testament survey class that provides an overview of Old Testament books. His instruction includes historical context and hermeneutics, the art and science of scriptural interpretation.

Dr. Harmon and wife Nichole raise six children and live in Boone, Iowa. He also teaches at a men's Bible study every week and serves in volunteer ministry roles at his church, Cornerstone Church of Ames.

In his Legislative Bible study, Dr. Harmon is teaching Bible studies Ralph Drollinger has written during nearly 30 years in ministry specifically to meet the personal and professional faith needs of public servants. The studies cover biblical leadership, faith building, parenting, marriage, governance, taxation, and contemporary issues from a biblical perspective, and more.

"Ralph's studies are very engaging," Dr. Harmon said. "I believe it's important to read Scripture daily, and having a study that's designed with an eye on the Capitol helps legislators put into practice what they are reading in the Word."

Iowa's legislative session begins in January and typically runs for 100 to 110 days, depending on the year. Dr. Harmon

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conducts Bible studies in person during the session, and after the Legislature adjourns, he continues the studies online until in-person meetings resume the following January when the Legislature reconvenes.

Dr. Harmon's vision is to offer the legislators an environment that does not revolve around legislation. "They will have a community that meets to enrich one another, even out of session," he said.

As with all CapMin Bible studies, everyone is welcome, regardless of partisanship.

"I would like to see, as we progress, a focus on the kingdom family and having legislators find common ground in Scripture, even if they are across the aisle," he said. "The study will build bridges with Scripture as the foundation."

er to live right? Therein is a display of respective *foolishness*. Learn to be obedient to God when no one is watching.

G. IT'S FOOLISH TO DISPLAY ANGER

A fool's anger is known at once, but a prudent man conceals dishonor (Proverbs 12:16).

He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly (14:29).

Scorners set a city aflame, but wise men turn away anger (29:8).

A fool always loses his temper, but a wise man holds it back (29:11).

Anger, apart from righteous indignation, is always a manifestation of selfishness. *Anger* is an indication of *foolishness*.

H. IT'S FOOLISH TO LACK HUMILITY

A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is arrogant and careless (Proverbs 14:16).

"Proud," "Haughty," "Scoffer," are his names, who acts with insolent pride (21:24).

He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but he who walks wisely will be delivered (28:26).

If you have been foolish in exalting yourself or if you have plotted evil, put your hand on your mouth (30:32).

Arrogance is a sure sign of *foolish* behavior.

I. IT'S FOOLISH TO REJECT KNOWLEDGE

Through Scripture, the pursuit of real knowledge of God—gaining an understanding of His character and attributes—is tantamount to wisdom.

Again, that is why in part God gifts His people with pastor-teachers, per Ephesians 4:11–12. They are to best be seen as spiritual coaches to help you grow in God's knowledge and wisdom.

The naive inherit foolishness, but the sensible are crowned with knowledge (Proverbs 14:18).

The mind of the intelligent seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feeds on folly (15:14).

Folly is joy to him who lacks sense, but a man of understanding walks straight (15:21).

Understanding is a fountain of life to one who has it, but the discipline of fools is folly (16:22).

Wisdom is in the presence of the one who has understanding, but the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth (17:24).

Ends of the earth refers to a *fool's* aimlessness and often random fixations that capture his attention, temporarily filling the void that only an understanding of God can fill.

The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of understanding (10:21).



Spiritual fellowship groups where there is very little or no impartation of Scripture—infusing in others the knowledge of God—should be re-labeled “Spiritually Folly Groups.”

It is folly to substitute anything for the knowledge of God.

J. FOOLS ARE VOID OF BLESSINGS

Desire realized is sweet to the soul, but it is an abomination to fools to turn away from evil (Proverbs 13:19).

He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm (13:20).

The crown of the wise is their riches, but the folly of fools is foolishness (14:24).

Luxury is not fitting for a fool; much less for a slave to rule over princes (19:10).

There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man swallows it up (21:20).

God in His graciousness blesses the wise and obedient. Given God’s propensity to bless wise and obedient behavior, it follows that to lack blessings in life is directly proportional to *foolishness*.

K. IT’S FOOLISH TO BE SELF-DESTRUCTIVE

Akin to the previous indicator of *foolishness*, a *fool* never experiences

the blessings a believer derives in this life from obedience to God and His Word—and foremost, from repenting and trusting in Christ for salvation. A hard life is inevitable for those who, in their stubbornness and rebellion, reject their Maker; they reap what they have sown before Almighty God.

The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands (Proverbs 14:1).

The king’s favor is toward a servant who acts wisely, but his anger is toward him who acts shamefully (14:35).

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

The foolishness of man ruins his way, and his heart rages against the Lord (19:3).

Judgments are prepared for scoffers, and blows for the back of fools (19:29).

The prudent sees the evil and hides himself, but the naive go on, and are punished for it (22:3).

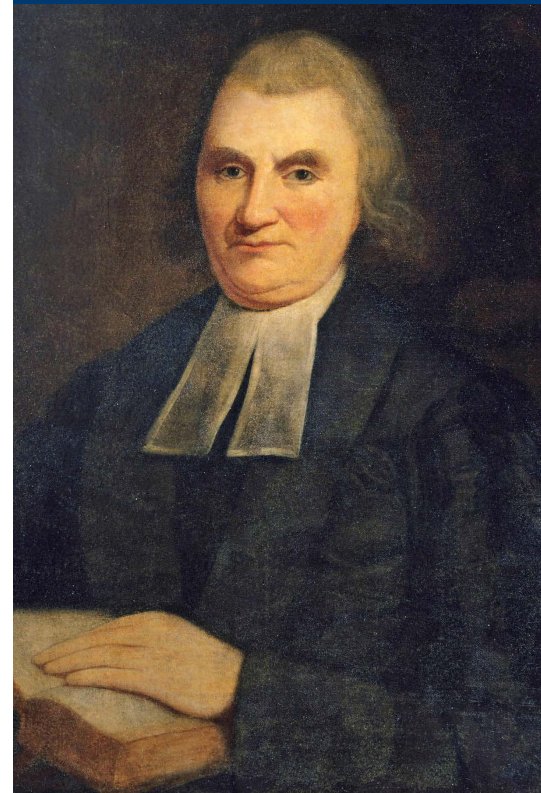
Foolish people self-destruct. Their life is hard indeed.

L. IT’S FOOLISH TO BE INTOXICATED

Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise (Proverbs 20:1).

There is no place for intoxication among public servants. Likened to all the 11 indicators of *foolishness* preceding it, intoxication is totally unacceptable for a leader.

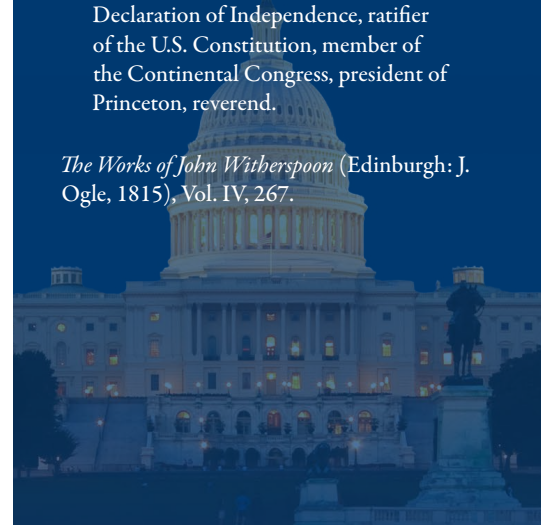
John Witherspoon



“The people in general ought to have regard to the moral character of those whom they invest with authority either in the legislative, executive, or judicial branches.”

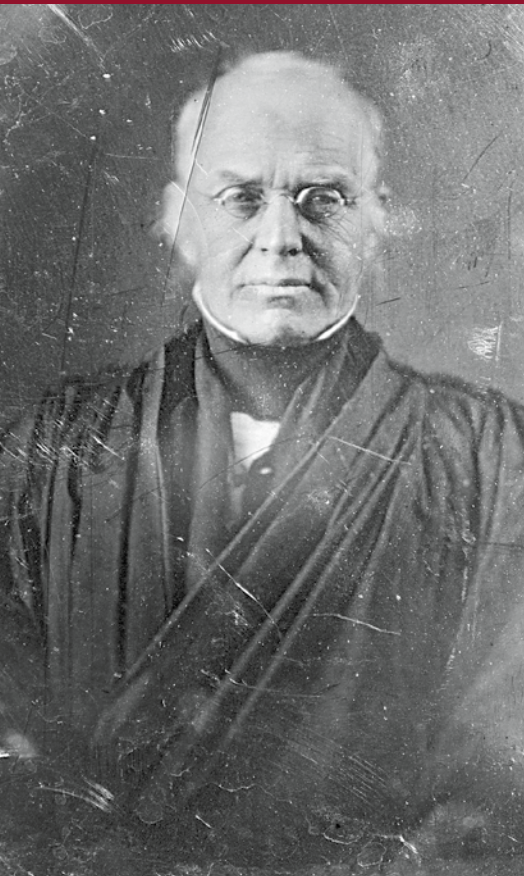
— John Witherspoon, signer of the Declaration of Independence, ratifier of the U.S. Constitution, member of the Continental Congress, president of Princeton, reverend.

The Works of John Witherspoon (Edinburgh: J. Ogle, 1815), Vol. IV, 267.





Joseph Story



“Republics are created by the virtue, public spirit, and intelligence of the citizens. They fall when the wise are banished from the public councils, because they dare to be honest, and the profligate are rewarded, because they flatter the people, in order to betray them.”

— Joseph Story, U.S. congressman, “Father of American Jurisprudence,” U.S. Supreme Court Justice appointed by President James Madison.

Commentaries on the Constitution, 1833.

In summary, these stated 12 matters are what Solomon definitively and comprehensively identifies as the behaviors and beliefs of *foolish* people. Herein then is a systematic theology on *foolishness*. All *fools* are in dire need of Christ and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to live victoriously over the sinful aspirations of our fallen flesh.

Now that we have comprehensively defined from Proverbs what the 12 indications of a *fool* are, exploring what Solomon says about interacting with such people is now appropriate.

III. TEN TIPS FOR DEALING WITH FOOLS

Proverbs 26:1–12 has much to say about how you should interact with a *fool*. Notice the practical advice that Solomon passed along to his son who would hold public office—and ostensibly to you who hold office. In addition, you will notice in what follows that I have added other pertinent proverbs that fit with the teachings of Proverbs 26. All of what follows presupposes your spiritual discernment, i.e., the ability to ascertain the difference between a wise, Christ-honoring individual on one hand and a *fool* on the other. Due to the length of this study, I will only list the Proverbs and refrain from comment.

A. DO NOT HONOR FOOLS

Like snow in summer and like rain in harvest, so honor is not fitting for a fool (26:1).

Like one who binds a stone in a sling, so is he who gives honor to a fool (26:8).

B. KEEP YOUR DISTANCE FROM FOOLS

A stone is heavy and the sand weighty, but the provocation of a fool is heavier than both of them (27:3).

A prudent man sees evil and hides himself, the naive proceed and pay the penalty (27:12).

C. DISCIPLINE FOOLS

A whip is for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools (26:3).

D. DO NOT DEBATE A FOOL

Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words (23:9).

Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will also be like him (26:4).

E. BE SHREWD IN DEALING WITH FOOLS

Answer a fool as his folly deserves, that he not be wise in his own eyes (26:5).

When a wise man has a controversy with a foolish man, the foolish man either rages or laughs, and there is no rest (29:9).

F. DO NOT RELY ON A FOOL

He cuts off his own feet and drinks violence who sends a message by the hand of a fool (26:6).

Like a bad tooth and an unsteady foot is confidence in a faithless man in time of trouble (25:19).



G. FOOLS TEND NOT TO CHANGE

Like the legs which are useless to the lame, so is a proverb in the mouth of fools (26:7).

Like a thorn which falls into the hand of a drunkard, so is a proverb in the mouth of fools (26:9).

Like a dog that returns to its vomit is a fool who repeats his folly (26:11).

Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him (26:12).

Though you pound a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his foolishness will not depart from him (27:22).

H. DO NOT HIRE A FOOL*

Like an archer who wounds everyone, so is he who hires a fool or who hires those who pass by (26:10).

In addition to Proverbs 26, Solomon adds some other passages that fit here to round out our list of tips.

I. FOOLS HAVE NO PLACE ON YOUR STAFF*

Drive out the scoffer, and contention will go out, even strife and dishonor will cease (22:10).

Wise is the believer in the Capitol who does not tolerate the presence of fools.

Because contention will go out and strife and dishonor will cease after the

removal of *fools*, the continual duty of the follower of Christ is to pray for the soul of the *foolish*. Herein, however, make no mistake, employment and evangelism are not the same. Don't employ a *fool*, thinking you will win him to Christ. The person who employs a *fool* does so to his own woe.

J. FOOLS HAVE NO PLACE IN PUBLIC OFFICE*

Wisdom is too exalted for a fool, he does not open his mouth in the gate (24:7).

In ancient times, *the gate*, where the leading minds debated the issues of life, was no place for a *fool*. Today's equivalent to *the gate* in a republic is the floor of the Capitol. Ideally, there should be an overwhelming sense of shame on those proffering *foolish* ideas. They should not dare to raise their microphone in the public square, and they don't when wisdom and dignity prevail in the hearts of individuals and in the base culture of a nation (which is quickly escaping us in America). Akin to this thought is the following fact:

To show partiality to the wicked is not good, nor to thrust aside the righteous in judgment (18:5).

The Capitol is the absolute last place where *foolish* individuals should reside.

IV. CONCLUSION

The determinative factors for wisdom versus *foolishness* is not always related to age. A young man can be wise, and an older man can be *foolish*—what is

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critical is whether or not the person is willing to obey Scripture.

Sometimes, however, *fools* do change. Notice the following proverbs in this regard. At least two proverbs provide hope for the *foolish*:

Strike a scoffer and the naive may become shrewd, but reprove one who has understanding and he will gain knowledge (19:25).

When the scoffer is punished, the naive becomes wise; but when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge (21:11).

May we all who name the name of Christ continue to pray for the *foolish* in our midst, that our great Savior might reach down from heaven and save all the more.

Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11).

*Notice from the definition of a *fool* in the introduction that I am not saying only Christians should be hired and non-Christians should be fired. Such a belief is to travel down the road toward a city named Theocracy, which the New Testament does not support. Some spiritually immature believers portray more of the 12 elements of *foolishness* than do some nonbelievers. These shortcomings, however, are not normative for true followers of Christ because the Holy Spirit will begin His sanctifying work in the heart of the truly repentant who have put their trust in the cross.

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