



International Fellowship of Christian Businessmen

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Round Table Topic

Becoming a Fool

by Os Hillman

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.”
– Proverbs 1:7

We Marvin Wilson, author of *Our Father Abraham*, has written incisively about the various meanings for our word “fool”:

In Biblical wisdom literature, the pupils of the sages and mentors are the unwise, often termed “fools” (Prov. 1:7) or “simple one” (1:22). In wisdom literature, the different levels of fools – both young and old – are the raw material on which the sages had to work, and they represent the varying degrees of rawness. Perhaps as much as anything else, the term fool is descriptive of an attitude, bent of mind, or direction in life, which needs correcting. The various Hebrew words for fool occur more than a hundred times in the book of Proverbs. [Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 284-286.]

The reference to someone being a fool was not necessarily a negative term. A simple fool, or *peti*, was a person who made mistakes, but quickly righted them and was restored to fellowship with God and with others. King David was a simple fool, one who made mistakes, but kept a repentant heart toward God. This is why God did not turn away from him for his many sins.

The hardened fool, *kesil* and *ewil*, makes mistakes, but never learns from them and will not listen to others. Such people can expect God’s reproof to continue and will eat the fruit of their own way

(see Prov. 1:31-32). The hardened fool “returns to his own vomit.” King Saul was a hardened fool, one who made mistakes and continued in them even after realizing he was wrong. We’re going to err in our ways. The question is, once we know we have made a mistake before God, do we make the necessary adjustments that will allow Him to intervene on our behalf? And will we avoid the same course of action in the future? God says that if we do, He will pour out His Spirit on us (see Prov. 1:23). He will make known His words to us. The third level of fool mentioned in Proverbs is the mocking fool or *letz*. The mocking fool mocks the things of God. This word means “scoffer” or “scorner.” When you encounter cynical people who disregard the things of God, you know these people are “mocking fools.”

The fourth level of fool is the God-denying fool or *nabal*. This term relates to the morally wicked person who ignores the disgrace he brings on his family and who despises holiness (see Prov. 17:21). This person says, “There is no God.” By failing to acknowledge God for who He is, the *nabal* declares himself to be a “God-denying” fool.