

Invited to Wisdom

Proverbs 9: 1-6 Psalms 34: 9-14 Pastor Lentz
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Wisdom is personified and is inviting us to take advantage of what she has created. She offers great benefit to any and to all. Wise people are glad to see her they trust her and believe in her. Wise people grow wiser. Wise people realize that a chastisement is a loving act when it protects us. Wise people appreciate what she offers and are awed by her willingness to share, as well as how practical and useful her knowledge is for life. In addition to the wise, she even invites the foolish to take part in what she has to offer. However to the fool, her offers often fall on deaf ears because fools usually think they know all there is to know.

Isn't it ironic that only when we can admit that we don't know everything that we can in fact learn at the greatest pace? Socrates is famous for saying, "I know that I am intelligent because I know that I know nothing." Real wisdom knows that even when you know a lot you still have a lot to learn.

Recently, I noticed a man who admittedly is bright, but he jumps to conclusions and never checks out his intuition, or his logic, based upon his unchecked intuition. As a result he is a fool in the surest sense. In Proverbs you would see that he is a fool because his arrogant stance excludes God. That too is ironic because he tends to use religious language to justify himself. His jumping to conclusions in his mind proves he is really sharp. It just makes him foolish and obnoxious. He collects what he thinks of as dirt on others because that makes him feel better about himself. He will often say things and watch your reaction

and then conclude whatever he thought in the first place. It proves to him that you are who he believed you were before he administered his test to you. Many people know what he is doing but they are not willing to tell him they know because he is so unpleasant to argue with. He qualifies as a legend in his own mind because he thinks he is. He may become a legend of what not to do in the minds of others.

There is a famous cartoon of Linus asking Charlie Brown how come he didn't draw hands on a figure that he drew. There is no answer at first and so Linus then concludes that it must be because Charlie Brown is wanting to show that our hands are tied in making the real changes we would like to make in the world. No says Charlie Brown, so Linus makes another guess. Well it is to show the human condition where we are dependent upon others. No says, Charlie Brown. I didn't draw hands because I don't know how to.

Thinking that we know what someone else means by the look on their face when they are an acquaintance and we ask them if what we see is accurate is wise. However, thinking that we know what someone close to us means by the look on their face is just foolish when our feelings are involved. It is because when my pride or feelings are involved I probably can't accurately see because my pride, fear, hurt or insecurity may get in the way. Lots of us make that mistake and believe we know when we don't we are however willing to learn better. The fool isn't like that. The fool is certain and will get even more certain and make even worse blunders.

They can't be taught because they are certain they are right. If the facts don't agree with them they simply bend them because being right is more important than the truth.

They believe they can know what their partner's facial expressions mean. They can't. They can't because none of us can accurately when our feelings are involved. Our own fears, hopes and sadness can alter

what we see, hear, or understand. Believing we can simply isn't good for us. It makes for a very difficult relationship with someone who is doing that because they are sure that they saw means what they think it does. It doesn't but trying to tell them that is neither fun nor usually helpful.

They are going to continue to believe what they believe because they are not friends with wisdom. They don't seek her out, or welcome her when she shows up. It is one of the ways that people display their foolishness. It is neither helpful, nor wise.

So too is justifying our behavior even though we know it is wrong. That too is what fools are often filled with doing. You know the fool in proverbs is the person who ignores what God says to do, and justifies their own behavior instead. Now probably all of us do some of this when we are upset and angry, hurt or afraid. The fool will continue to do it even when things are calm, and wise people tell them to stop their foolish blaming, sniping, and being hurtful to others. The fool is willing to justify their actions instead of recognize they were wrong and change. It is a foolish prideful thing where instead of admitting they were wrong, they are going to justify, remain angry, and blame, blame blame. That is because if they didn't they might have to recognize that what they are doing is wrong.

They instead proudly proclaim that they deserve to do what they are doing. They have been hurt, or they deserve to do it because it is owed to them. I knew a woman in prison who justified stealing an elderly woman's jewelry because the woman owed her for helping fix a storm door. She stole something about 20 times the value of what the elderly woman owed, if she even owed anything. You might enjoy knowing that young woman who was so in denial and who stole from that woman and then justified it, ultimately turned her life around and actually became a wise woman. She was willing to admit that she didn't

know everything. A real fool won't. They won't admit because they are afraid of admitting that, for all sorts of reasons.

They will justify their actions even though they know they are wrong. Every criminal can justify their actions. The worse the criminal the more elaborate they can be in justifying their actions. Their words will sound good, and right in their eyes. Of course they may have to tell everyone they see for a long time because telling your fictitious side often enough can convince even you, as long as you don't check it out. It is simply foolish, and dishonest.

Over time the fool even begins to avoid anyone who might as Wisdom world point out that they are doing things against what God says to do. That is when someone is truly lost. A person who sins and knows they are sinning is not lost. The person who sins and justifies their sin, while avoiding anyone who would or could point out that what they are doing is morally wrong, is totally lost. They are rejecting God, and all of God's messengers. They are rejecting the very wisdom that could help them to become ok.

So if you can identify with the fool and feel encouraged to make changes then wisdom is still calling to you. It means that you are drawn more to wisdom and she will help you improve. In fact, she will help you become happier, as well as wiser. If you know a fool who has been rejecting of God's wisdom and you have tried to help them with no success, then it is time to pray for them. We are told in Proverbs that God is the only one who can change some fools hearts.

One irony about wisdom is that it is also all bound up with what God tells us to do in the first place. Wisdom and what God encourages us to do are so close together they might as well be twins.

The more that I read what we are encouraged to do the more wisdom that I see in it. It is as if what the Bible tells us to do is what will keep us the safest, and make our lives the best. Wisdom begins to smell like the air does after a summer rain. It just smells good and clean. There are some who would say that God smells like that.

There are others who would say that God smells like fresh baked bread. They would say that God smells wholesome good and healthy for you. There are others who would say that God smells like vanilla, because they find vanilla inviting sweet, and calming.

Still others might say that God smells like salt water. For them being near the Ocean means feeling close to God. For them seeing how large the ocean is reminds them of how they imagine God to be. Because it is so powerful for them just smelling the smell of salt water makes them think of God.

The Psalmist allowed hills, pastures, and things that he saw all the time to remind him of God. That is wise. It is a way of engaging God in the everyday events of our lives. Of course we can and most of us do the very same things. We appreciate the sky, the trees, grass, and birds to name a few. We praise God for how amazing creation is. We are thankful for all the things that we see God's hand in creating. In that sense you could even smile when you see a fool, and know that God isn't finished with them. When they stop their rebellious behavior they just may become very drawn to God's wisdom.

If we allow ourselves to even appreciate that Wisdom continues to call out even to the fool, we can appreciate that God is everywhere, all the time calling to us wanting us to listen. In that way we can become even more encouraged by even seeing how rebellious the fool is because it would affirm our knowledge of wisdom. Seeing the fool might just be wisdom calling out to us as well. Amen

