



Fool Proofing Your Life

He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.

Proverbs 3:13

Do you have a fool in your life? Does the question fill you with a twinge of guilt or anxiety? For many of us, the memory of our own foolish choices, make us hesitant to call anyone a fool. Yet, few of us would deny that we know someone who consistently makes choices which make their lives and relationships difficult and painful. Some of us live with people whose poor choices and refusal to change fill our own lives with pain and confusion. We desperately need words to honestly describe what is happening. For some, the word *abuse* accurately describes their experience, but when they turn to Scripture for answers, the word *abuse* is missing. On closer look, however, the reality of abuse is woven throughout God's Word in words like violence and oppression and fools. In the book of Proverbs alone, four different words describe the characteristics of fools that dovetail with read our contemporary descriptions of abuse.

God understands the pain of living in close proximity with a fool/abuser and offers compassionate wisdom to those entangled in the confusion and reality of life with such a person. Let's take a quick look at just of the few of the proverbs (There are many more!) that describe fools and at how the biblical definition of fool describes the difficult people and relationships in our own lives. You may want to explore the Old Testament book of Proverbs to learn more about fools/abusers and how to respond to them.

- ◆ **Self-reliant and self-centered – believes his thoughts are right and his actions are acceptable because they are his**

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

- Unwilling to seek counsel and refuses to accept feedback
- Unable to tolerate questions or input from outside sources
- Believes he can change on his own

- ◆ **Deceitful—entices others into relationship with false intimacy and dishonesty**

*Proverbs 15:5—The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life,
but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.*

- Practices deceit in order to lure others into relationships
- Makes promises, that he does not keep, in order to keep others in relationship
- Can be very attentive, loving and romantic in order to get what he wants
- May present his controlling, manipulative or violent behaviors only in his primary relationships. Outside the home, he may be a valued worker, committed board member or respected colleague.
- May show signs of remorse for his behavior, (apologies, gifts, service) but shows no sign of godly sorrow which leads to true repentance

- ◆ **Complacent—his own sin does not bother him, he sees no reason to change.**

*Proverbs 10:23—He who trusts in his own heart is a fool,
but he who walks wisely will be delivered.*

- Blames others for his own behavior
- Justifies, blames, denies, minimizes his own hurtful behavior
- Unmoved by the appeals of those he claims to love
- Mocks those who dare confront him

◆ **Controlling—seeks to control or change others rather than take responsibility for his own choices**

*Proverbs 18:2—A fool finds no pleasure in understanding,
but delights in airing his own opinions.*

- Seeks to define and control his partner's thoughts, emotions, choices and activities using whatever means he feels necessary (misuse of Scripture, verbal/emotional abuse, isolation or physical violence).

◆ **Lacks Empathy—refuses to be moved by the pain his foolish and abusive choices bring to others**

*Proverbs 12:10—Better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs,
than a fool in his folly.*

- Denies or minimizes the pain and/or injury his actions cause
- Has difficulty identifying his own emotions
- Has difficulty expressing his wants/needs in honest, healthy, and assertive ways
- Disregards his partner's emotional, spiritual and physical needs
- Disregards, or is cruel to, children and animals

◆ **Angry—uses anger to get his own way**

*Proverbs 29:11—A fool gives full vent to his anger,
but a wise man keeps himself under control.*

- Uses anger to produce fear and distance in a relationship in order to get what he wants (to be left alone, to not have to make decisions, to not have to listen or be involved).
- Uses anger to keep his spouse from enjoying relationships with family, friends or co-workers
- Anger may seem out of control, but it is very much in control

◆ **Causes Destruction—the abuser becomes hardened and victims of abuse bear deep wounds**

Proverbs 14:12—There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

*Proverbs 24:14—Know also that wisdom is sweet to your soul; if you find it,
there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.*

Foolish and abusive people create tremendous amounts of pain, fear and confusion in their relationships. Fools/abusers seldom take any responsibility for their own foolish choices or the pain they cause and often succeed in making their victims feel guilty and responsible for their own pain. When trust has been violated too many times to sustain love, relationships die—but deep wounds remain. But there is hope for healing. Wisdom brings sweet hope, even to the soul of the victim, and wisdom can be found in relationship with God and in community with safe, imperfect, growing, compassionate people.

Resources: Jan Silvious, *Foolproofing Your Life* (Colorado: Waterbrook Press) 1998
The Holy Bible, New International Version, Zondervan Publishing House, 1977