

THE "FOOL" IN PROVERBS: THE DEFINITIONS, THE PROBLEM FACING
COUNSELORS TODAY AND THE ONLY ADEQUATE SOLUTION

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

One of the most common teaching devices contained in the book of Proverbs is to present two contrastive statements as antithetical truths.¹ Furthermore, the wisdom versus folly motif is replete in Hebrew poetic thought and, especially, in the book of Proverbs. Goldberg asserts that the main emphasis of the wisdom proverbs is “the bitter pill of living as a fool.”² Similarly, as Richard Mayhue put it, “[Proverbs] teaches how to live a wise life that will be pleasing to God and spiritually satisfying to oneself. God’s wisdom in Proverbs stands in stark contrast to human folly.”³ When we, as biblical counselors, encourage a person to submit to the authority of God’s Word, this counselee is confronted with a choice. There are only two options. Either he will choose to go in the way of the Lord or in the way of the wicked (cf. Psa 1). It is a reality, unfortunately, that many counselors are neglecting God’s Word and, therefore, are ignoring the sole source of divine truth given to mankind today.

The problem that this paper will deal with is not so much the counselees and their refusal to walk in the way of the Lord and to submit to the Lordship of Christ in every area of life but rather to deal with the secular “Christian” counselors and their refusal to use God’s Word as the sole source of truth and using the Scriptures to adequately and sufficiently address any and every problem a person may ever meet. This paper, then, is not an in-depth not is it an exhaustive study on every occurrence of “fool” in the book of Proverbs.⁴ Rather, it is my goal that this will cause

¹ For example, Proverbs 33:3:

The	curse of the LORD	is on	the house of the wicked,
But	He blesses		the dwelling of the righteous.

² Louis Goldberg, *The Practical Wisdom of Proverbs* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1990), 38.

³ Richard Mayhue, *Practicing Proverbs: Wise Living for Foolish Times* (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2003), 34.

⁴ Though many of the Scriptures will be cited or alluded to.

us as biblical counselors to be reminded that our foundation for everything we say to a counselee must stem from God’s Word. If we neglect this absolutely crucial sword in our weaponry as we endeavor to lovingly, biblically, humbly yet boldly confront sin in the life of the counselee, then we have, essentially, become a “foolish” counselor.⁵

THE DEFINITION OF A “FOOL” IN PROVERBS⁶

When we come to the beautiful poetry and the brash statements in the book of Proverbs it is essential to note some of the key terms that are found repetitiously.⁷ The goal in this section is to understand the definitions and usages of the various words which occur in the Proverbs which our English bibles translate “fool.”⁸

A Stupid Fellow - כְּסִיל

One of the most frequent Hebrew words which is translated as “fool” is כְּסִיל. כְּסִיל is used 75 times in the Old Testament, many of which are found in the book of Proverbs.⁹ It occurs

⁵ And it is my argument that the word “biblical” ought to be removed from those who set the Bible aside in “Christian” counseling in the belief that God’s Word is old and outdated, insufficient for all of life’s issues, unclear or whatever other excuse they may propose.

⁶ Another helpful discussion here is found in Mayhue’s book, *Practicing Proverbs*, when he lists five different kinds of fools as found in the Scripture, 62-64.

⁷ This is not the place to delve into a study of Hebrew poetry and the common poetic feature of repetition. Wilson notes that oftentimes “repetition is used to convey a sense of *urgency*” (Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series [Sheffield, U.K.: JSOT Press, 1984], 277). He continues: “repetition enables the audience to re-hear a verse which they may have missed through inattention or on account of interference (‘noise’). Repetition also reduces the need for a poet to invent new material: it helps ‘fill up’ a poem” (ibid., 278-79).

⁸ Meanwhile, it is recognized that there is much flexibility in the semantic domain of these words. There is a rich vocabulary of “folly” in the OT. With this said, Tremper Longman III notes: “a hierarchy of fools can be roughly constructed, and the stands between the [range of] כְּסִיל (“fool”) and the לָצֵחַ (“mockery”)” (*Proverbs*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2006], 102).

⁹ Josh 15:30; Job 9:9; 38:31; Ps 49:11; 92:7; 94:8; Prov 1:22, 32; 3:35; 8:5; 10:1, 18, 23; 12:23; 13:16, 19f; 14:7f, 16, 24, 33; 15:2, 7, 14, 20; 17:10, 12, 16, 21, 24f; 18:2, 6f; 19:1, 10, 13, 29; 21:20; 23:9; 26:1, 3ff; 28:26; 29:11, 20; Eccl 2:14ff; 4:5, 13, 17; 5:2f; 6:8; 7:4ff, 9; 9:17; 10:2, 12, 15; Isa 13:10; and Amos 5:8.

both in the singular (כָּסִיל) and in the plural (כָּסִילִים). The first occurrence of כָּסִיל is in Proverbs 10:1- The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son makes a father glad, But a foolish (כָּסִיל) son is a grief to his mother.¹⁰ We could also observe Proverbs 10:18- He who conceals hatred has lying lips, And he who spreads slander is a fool (כָּסִיל).

כָּסִיל is most often translated “fool” in our English Bibles. What כָּסִיל really means is “a stupid fellow, a dullard, a fool.”¹¹ Goldberg in *TWOT* notes so accurately that this word does not refer to a dull or obstinate one, but rather “to a propensity to make wrong choices.”¹² It is this person who deliberately knows the correct path to take yet he foolishly chooses not to follow this path. As Proverbs 1:22 notes “How long, O naive ones, will you love simplicity? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing, And fools (כָּסִיל) hate knowledge?” It is for this very purpose that the most appropriate meaning behind כָּסִיל is a “stupid fellow.”

A Morally Corrupted Fool - אָוִיל

¹⁰ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible, Updated Edition (1995).

¹¹ Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 493.

¹² Louis Goldberg, “כָּסִיל,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Edited by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago, Moody Press, 1980), 1:449. He continues to note: “We note the kind of choices which the makes. His eyes are unable to see any proper way or conduct. He may roam the earth seeking it, but miss it completely. Apparently he does not concentrate on what is right (Prov 17:24). The fool imagines that he can buy wisdom when actually he has no inclination for it (Prov 17:16). He takes no delight in understanding (Prov 18:2), hates knowledge (Prov 1:22), and therefore does not choose the fear of the Lord (Prov 1:29). The end of the fool’s complacency is destruction (Prov 1:32)” (ibid.).

This word, אָוִיל, occurs 27 times in the Hebrew Bible.¹³ It, like כְּסִיל, is oft translated “fool” yet here the distinction in meaning ought to be made. אָוִיל may be from an Arabic word meaning “to be thick [of fluids],”¹⁴ and therefore אָוִיל refers to one who is “thickbrained or stupid.”¹⁵ It is this “fool” who is recognized as soon as he utters a word. Proverbs 17:28 notes that “Even a fool (אָוִיל), when he keeps silent, is considered wise; When he closes his lips, he is counted prudent.” Again, Proverbs 20:3 notes “Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, But any fool (אָוִיל) will quarrel.” It is this fool who is always morally bad. He is so thickbrained that he can’t do anything wise. It is this kind of folly which “results in disaster and leads to death; it is disqualifying in a religious sense and becomes equivalent to “godlessness/sacrilege.”¹⁶ Therefore it is logical to deduce that this person is a morally corrupted fool.

A Proudful and Ignoble Boor - נָבֵל

נָבֵל is a word which occurs 25 times in the Hebrew OT.¹⁷ Of which, only one occurrence is in Proverbs (30:32). This verb is used to refer to something sinking or dropping down (Exo 18:18), or of a leaf falling from a tree (Isa 1:30). However, this word is found in

¹³ 2 Kgs 24:15; Job 5:2f; Ps 107:17; Prov 1:7; 7:22; 10:8, 10, 14, 21; 11:29; 12:15f; 14:3, 9; 15:5; 16:22; 17:28; 20:3; 24:7; 27:3, 22; 29:9; Isa 19:11; 35:8; Jer 4:22; and Hos 9:7.

¹⁴ BDB, 16.

¹⁵ Louis Goldberg, “אָוִיל,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Edited by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago, Moody Press, 1980), 1:19.

¹⁶ M. Saebo, “אָוִיל,” *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Edited by Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann. Trans. by Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 1:58.

¹⁷ Exod 18:18; Deut 32:15; 2 Sam 22:46; Job 14:18; Ps 1:3; 18:46; 37:2; Prov 30:32; Isa 1:30; 24:4; 28:1, 4; 34:4; 40:7f; 64:5; Jer 8:13; 14:21; Ezek 47:12; Mic 7:6; and Nah 3:6.

Proverbs 30:32- “If you have been foolish (נָבֵל) in exalting yourself Or if you have plotted evil, put your hand on your mouth.” It is for this specific occurrence in Proverbs that I have termed נָבֵל as best translated a prideful and ignoble boor.

An Open-Minded and Naive Fool - פְּתָאִים¹⁸

This kind of fool, פְּתָאִים, is found 19 times in the Old Testament,¹⁹ 16 of which are in the Proverbs. פְּתָאִים is from the root פָּתַח²⁰ meaning open-minded or simple person. It refers to one who is “untutored.”²¹ It is one who is open to the instruction or folly has believes every word of it.²² This person is the “immature or simple one who is open to all kinds of enticement, not having developed a discriminating judgment as to what is right or wrong.”²³ So, in Proverbs, this person needs to be well taught: Proverbs 14:15- “The naive (פְּתִי) believes everything, But the prudent man considers his steps.”

An Apostate Mocker - לִיץ

¹⁸ Time and space does not allow for me to elaborate on another word for fool found in Proverbs and that is בְּעֵר meaning “stupid;” or “brutish.” It is used 5 times in the OT (Ps 49:11; 73:22; 92:7; Prov 12:1; and 30:2).

¹⁹ Ps 19:8; 116:6; 119:130; Prov 1:4, 22, 32; 7:7; 8:5; 9:4, 6, 16; 14:15, 18; 19:25; 21:11; 22:3; 27:12; and Ezek 45:20.

²⁰ Which even comes from the verb פָּתַח meaning “open.”

²¹ Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, Word Biblical Commentary, Gen eds. Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard, and Glenn W. Barker (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 3.

²² BDB, 834.

²³ Louis Goldberg, “פתח,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Edited by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago, Moody Press, 1980), 2:743.

The **אָלֵף** is one who is the “most hardened apostate.” This word for “fool,” or most often translated “mocker” is found 28 times in the OT, 18 of which are in Proverbs.²⁴ **אָלֵף** is the one whose spiritual problem is rooted “in their overweening pride (21:24). His supercilious arrogance blocks him from wisdom ... and he opens his big mouth and, unleashing the tensions and strains in a community, he sets the whole community at loggerheads.”²⁵ This is the kind of fool that “must be avoided by all who would live godly lives” (cf. Psa 1:1).²⁶ This is demonstrated by Proverbs 9:8 which reads, “Do not reprove a scoffer (**אָלֵף**), lest he hate you, Reprove a wise man, and he will love you” (cf. Prov 13:1; 15:12). Again, Proverbs 21:24 reads: “‘Proud,’ ‘Haughty,’ ‘Scoffer’ (**אָלֵף**), are his names, Who acts with insolent pride.” So it is after this short survey of **אָלֵף** that it is evident he is an apostate mocker.

So after looking at these various terms it is reasonable to come to the conclusion that the “foolish man” is a recurring theme in the wisdom book of Proverbs. We must not read the book of Proverbs and think that the “fool” (whichever *kind* he may be) is an anachronism and was relevant only in the ancient biblical world. I believe there are more fools in today’s day and age than there ever have been in the history of the church. Yet biblical counselors are faced with a problem, how can (or ought!) *we* as counselors give adequate counsel to people in our churches who may fall into one of these categories of “fool?”

THE ONLY SOLUTION FOR A “FOOL”

²⁴ Gen 42:23; 2 Chr 32:31; Job 16:20; 33:23; Ps 1:1; 119:51; Prov 1:22; 3:34; 9:7f, 12; 13:1; 14:6, 9; 15:12; 19:25, 28f; 20:1; 21:11, 24; 22:10; 24:9; Isa 28:22; 29:20; 43:27; and Hos 7:5.

²⁵ See Bruce Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Gen eds. R. K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 1:114. See Waltke’s excellent discussion for the various terms of fool in his commentary (1:109-16).

²⁶ See Walker Kaiser, “**אָלֵף**,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Edited by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1980), 1:479.

The biblical counselor must be crystal clear on the only sufficient solution before he can adequately and biblically counsel a person who is willingly rejecting God's commands or naively accepting everything he is confronted with. For the **לֵץ**, **פְּתִי נָבֵל**, **אֲוִיל**, **כַּסִּיל**, and the **לֵץ**, there is only *one* solution. That is, that God's Word is the sole and supreme source of divine truth (2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21; John 17:17) and the sufficient means by which a person can adequately deal with any life issue (2 Pet 1:3-4; Psa 119:34, 97).

The problem is, secular psychology, psychotherapy, psychiatry, and even "Christian" psychology is afraid to deal with people's most fundamental problem, namely, sin. This is precisely why so many children are on prescribed medications without biblical reason; additionally, why so many people attribute drunkenness, sexual sin, drug addictions and anger to anything and everything *but* sin.²⁷ The issue at hand for a fool is not to have some sort of medication prescribed to him but rather to recognize the sin in his life, repent, and turn from it and replace those sins with Christlike life-patterns (Eph 4:22-32; Col 3:9-17 – "the put off-put on" principle). "God has given in His Word the wonderful guidelines to help His children endure physical problems."²⁸

It is evident that in some secular circles counseling includes the following concepts:²⁹

1. Good helpers³⁰ have the belief that it is the personal meaning of another person that is what is important, not external, behavioral data. They believe in being sensitive and emphatic.
2. Good helpers have very positive beliefs about people, seeing them as dependable, able, and trustworthy.

²⁷ And the list could go on with any other problem a person faces.

²⁸ Robert D. Smith, *The Christian Counselor's Medical Desk Reference* (Stanley, N.C.: Timeless Texts, 2002), 25.

²⁹ Adapted from J. Vincent Peterson and Bernard Nisenholz, *Orientation to Counseling* (Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 1999), 4-5.

³⁰ Here being used as a synonym for "counselor."

3. Good helpers have a positive belief in self. They have a good self-concept, confidence in their abilities, and a feeling of oneness with others.
4. Good helpers have strong beliefs about purposes and priorities. Beliefs held about the purposes of society, helping, and relationships influence their goals and their interventions.
5. Good helpers have strong beliefs about appropriate methods for helping. Research has not indicated any specific methods that discriminate between effective and ineffective helpers. It appears that it may well be the values and beliefs that the helper has about the methods used that make the difference.

Along these lines, secular psychologists see their counseling as merely attempting to help the person “get better” or “get over their problem.” This is radically different than the biblical purpose for counseling. Moreover, the recurring theme of the helper having a positive belief in “self” is inadequate and self-destructive. Having strong views and beliefs about the methods of implementation may or may not help the counselee overcome the problem. But even if it does help, it is temporal and peripheral. It would be as if a person severely cut his arm on a piece of metal and tried to bandage up this large wound with a finger-size band-aid. It simply won’t work. As Schwab rightly concludes, “The stated goal of Proverbs’s counsel is *not* to bring relief from depression, addictions, loneliness, anorexia, mania, low self-esteem, codependency, or any other “psychological” woe.”³¹

This is illustrative of three methods of gaining information (or knowledge) as the counselor approaches his counseling:³²

1. Empiricism- This vehicle for gaining information is merely from manmade and human discoveries. Of course, this only goes so far as the human being is capable of going. Hence, it has its severe limitations because human beings are limited in knowledge.

³¹ George M. Schwab, “The Proverbs and the Art of Persuasion.” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 14, no. 1 (Fall 1995): 7. Schwab continues to note that “the goal of counseling *is* to provide a framework of thinking, a structured mind with categories of right and wrong clearly defined, to help a person interpret all the myriad experiences of life and walk a just and righteous path. *A proverbial counselor defines “counsel” according to Proverbs’s goals, NOT according to the commonly accepted goals of our day” (emphasis added) (7-8).*

³² Only one of which qualifies for “biblical” counseling, the other three are all man-centered; that is, they enthrone man and dethrone God. The idea and guidance for these three points came from Dr. John Street’s Unpublished Syllabus, *An Introduction to Pastoral Counseling*, Summer 2006 Class Syllabus, 27-28.

2. Reason- That the innate knowledge and sense within an individual is sufficient for all matters of life is severely wanting. Human reason is limited because we are, in fact, human beings. It is also limited having been tainted by sin. Not only being subjective in its thought processes, human reason at its core demands the final say and, on the reciprocal, the Bible is placed under human sense.
3. Revelation- this is the only all-sufficient means by which the biblical counselor can gain adequate information to counsel. This does not mean that there is no truth elsewhere. However, this says that in both general and special revelation, God reveals Himself. Specifically, God reveals himself in and through His written Word, the Bible (Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Tim 3:16-17).

The only solution is to remember that God has a purpose for all things. And, as Dr. Smith correctly observes as he relates God's purposes to illness,

God has a purpose for illness, and it is of benefit to the sick person. Getting over the illness should *not* be the primary goal. Even though healing was the end result of each illness in these biblical accounts, the statements Christ made were about the illness itself. God intends to use illness for His glory. What glorifies Him is what is best for all believers; therefore what glorifies Him will be the best for the sick believer. Getting well is not necessarily the best thing.³³

God has a plan for everything (Eph 1:11; Rom 8:28-29; Gen 50:20). As a result of this, the biblical counselor *is* under divine command to proclaim the gospel of truth to the foolish counselee who is wayward in his relationship with God (2 Tim 4:1-5).³⁴ As the well-known biblical counseling anthem goes, "All counseling is pre-counseling until the counselee repents of his sin and believes in Christ."

Specifically, this solution that the biblical counselor must present to the counselee is the fact that he is a sinner by nature and that is his most fundamental problem (Psa 51:5; Rom 3:23; Eph 2:1-3; Rom 8:8).³⁵ Everything else is an effect from this sin nature. The "fool" in proverbs is

³³ Smith, *Christian Counselor's Medical Desk Reference*, 31.

³⁴ Schwab notes that the "counselor must speak with the authority of God" (cf. Prov 1:13-14; 9:10-12) (Proverbs and the Art of Persuasion," 9).

³⁵ Jay Adams has a very helpful chart which relates to this fundamental issue related to biblical counseling (*Shepherding God's Flock: A Handbook on Pastoral Ministry, Counseling, and Leadership* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1975], 166):

the one who continues to abide in his sin while, at the same time, rejecting the sacrificial death and, as a result, arrogantly saying that the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ doesn't quite meet their need. And the only way that this is effectively accomplished is through the constant counsel³⁶ from the Bible, for it is the Spirit of God working through the Word of God to the person to regenerate him and turn him from his foolish way (1 Cor 2:12-14; John 3:5; cf. Acts 5:33; 7:54).

THE DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCE FOR THE "FOOL"

The issue here is an urgent plea directed toward counselors to take God's Word seriously and wisely and accurately incorporate it into *every* counseling session, constantly! I dare to say that the "Christian" counselor who neglects to observe what God has to say regarding an issue he (or his counselee) is facing is acting as a "fool." Proverbs 3:3 is fitting here as it reads, "Do not let kindness and *truth* leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart" (*emphasis added*).³⁷

Non-Christian Presupposition

1. Freud: Man is not responsible for what he does.
2. Rogers: Man has all of the resources within himself.
3. Skinner. Man is but an animal whose only value is his contribution to the survival of the human herd.

Christian Presupposition

1. Christ: Man is a responsible sinner who needs to be changed
2. Christ: To change, man must be confronted by My Word in the power of my Spirit.
3. Christ: Each man was created in God's image and must be confronted, persuaded and changed for His individual benefit.

³⁶ In fact, this is a very strong word in the Greek, *νουθετέω*. It means "to counsel about avoidance or cessation of an improper course of conduct; to admonish; to warn; to instruct" (Walter Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Rev. and ed. by Frederick William Danker [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 679). See Rom 15:14; 1 Cor 4:14; Col 1:28; 3:16; 1 Thess 5:12-14; and 2 Thess 3:15.

³⁷ It is even more emphatic in the Hebrew:

Proverbs 3:3

חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת אֶל־יַעֲזֹבֶךָ קִשְׁרָם עַל־גְּרוֹתֶיךָ כְּתֹבם עַל־לִיחַ לְבָבְךָ³

If the counselor, however, leaves the “fool” in his sin, he will have a hard life, for Proverbs 13:15 notes, “the way of transgressors *is* hard” (KJV). Most importantly, he will be dead in his sins with no eternal cure to cover his sin and folly. Permit me to list just a few proverbs and elaborate briefly regarding the “foolish fellow”:

Proverbs 10:14- “Wise men store up knowledge, But with the mouth of the foolish (פִּי־אֵיִל), ruin is at hand.” The foolish man in this verse reveals that ruin (or destruction)³⁸ has come near. This is, in no way, characteristic of the Christian striving to live for the glory of God.

Proverbs 29:9- “When a wise man has a controversy with a foolish (אֵיִל) man, The foolish man either rages or laughs, and there is no rest.” The foolish man has no rest in God because he has no lasting forgiveness from his sin. This fool is still dead and drowning in the despair of his depravity and is absolutely helpless to save himself. On the contrary, the believer in God is called to rest in Him (Psa 4:4; 46:10).

Proverbs 30:32- “If you have been foolish (נָבֵל) in exalting yourself Or if you have plotted *evil*, put your hand on your mouth.” This proverb reveals that the fool is one who exalts himself. This is the epitome of dethroning God and enthroning self. This fool endeavors to take God off of his sovereign throne (Psa 93:1-2; Isa 45:5, 6, 14, 21) and exalt self which ultimately leads to eternal torment in hell (cf. Matt 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14).³⁹

Proverbs 14:29- “He who is slow to anger has great understanding, But he who is quick-tempered exalts folly (אֵלֶּת).” Clearly this is the fool who is constantly angry, quarreling and

³⁸ מִחַתָּה

³⁹ Note also the cross reference to 2 Thessalonians 2:4 where he who “opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God” is the Antichrist!

raging with emotion. The fruit of the Spirit are obviously not evident in this fool's life (Gal 5:22-23; esp. "patience").

Proverbs 10:23- "Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool (כְּסִיל); And *so is* wisdom to a man of understanding." There is perhaps no clearer and stark contrast in all the book of Proverbs than here. Solomon deciphers between the fool who takes pleasure in wickedness whereas the man of understanding practices and evidences true wisdom (cf. Prov 10:8). "The point is the moral bankruptcy of the fool, who takes his wrongdoing as lightly as a joke."⁴⁰

It is for these reasons (and a plethora of others!) that we must give God's Word to the counselee who is living in sin so that he may turn from his foolish ways. For "we want the truth we teach them to change their lives and make them more like Christ."⁴¹

In conclusion, it behooves the biblical counselor to take this issue to heart and call the foolish man to turn from his simplicity and folly. Let it never be forgotten that "this 'turning' is a turning from loving 'simple ways' (1:22), that is, a life apart from Yahweh, to the 'fear of the LORD' (2:5) and his discipline (3:11-12). The ultimate motivation is spiritual. To love the Lord for His sake is the core of wise counsel (1:7; 2:5; 3:9-12)."⁴² The Scriptures really do contain all the information necessary to "life and godliness" (2 Pet 1:3).⁴³ May the practical and sobering

⁴⁰ Murphy, *Proverbs*, WBC, 75.

⁴¹ Wayne A. Mack, "Providing Instruction through Biblical Counseling," *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), 169.

⁴² Schwab, "Proverbs and the Art of Persuasion," 12.

⁴³ Wayne Mack explicates by noting, "An in-depth study of its contents [2 Pet 1:3] is rewarded with insights into even the most complicated human experiences. What happens all too often in counseling, however, is that the counselor assumes that the Scripture does not speak to the particular problem of a counselee, and therefore, the counselor abandons the Word prematurely and seeks input from the ideas of men" ("Providing Instruction through Biblical Counseling," 163).

words of Louis Goldberg be etched on our minds as we remember the *centrality* of the Word of God in all our counseling sessions:

Folly, however, does not even begin to satisfy the heart hunger of man, and offers nothing to slake the thirst of the soul. There is nothing at her table to help the morally inexperienced progress in discernment, understanding, and spiritual maturity. All folly has to offer are some stale crumbs and scummy water.⁴⁴

And he concludes by warning,

For guests feeding on what folly has to offer, life becomes a dismal experience and death a time of horror. Eternity will yawn open to snatch its foolish victims, and they will be separated from the Lord forever and ever. How can anyone be so blind as to choose the consequences of such a revolting invitation to partake of folly's cursed crumbs?⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Goldberg, *Practical Wisdom of Proverbs*, 110-11.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

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