

## FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS

### *A study of what God has to say in Proverbs and the Old Testament about “Fools.”*

What is a fool? What is his nature? How does a person become a fool?

Is he born that way? No, it is a result of choices that he makes in life for which he is responsible.

Does a person become a fool in one sudden action or progressively? As you will see in this study, he becomes a fool as a result of a series of choices, whether over a long period of time or a brief period of time.

There are other questions for which the answers are not so clear. For instance, how does he affect others? Usually, a fool is both destructive to others and contagious to those closest around him.

How should we treat a fool? God has given us answers in His Word and since the ideas of man are always inferior to God’s guidance, we should study what God has to say and do what He tells us even when we don’t understand or readily agree with what He says.

**Webster’s definition:** A fool, an idiot, a windbag (in allusion to the puffed cheeks of a windbag)

1. One who is lacking in reason, or the common powers of understanding; an idiot, an imbecile.
2. A person with little or no judgment, common sense, wisdom, etc.; a silly person; a simpleton.

Webster’s definition seems to place an emphasis upon the cognitive mental capacity or development of a person and his actions.

The Scriptural description of fools, while including that which is found in Webster’s, is much more complex and thorough.

First, in the Scriptures, and primarily in Proverbs, we will discover that there is more than one type of fool. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that there are several classes of fools, indicated by words that move from the simple to the more advanced condition.

Second, the characteristics described by these words, while including those found in Webster’s dictionary, broaden the definition to point out that the mental problems which are associated with a fool are due to the fool’s moral problems. Then, in addition to indicating what causes a person to be a fool, the Scriptures also tell others how to avoid being a fool and others how to relate to a fool as well as describing the consequences of being a fool.

The Scriptural descriptions of a “**fool**,” as observed in the Old Testament, are presented in the following Hebrew words:

1. **peth-ee** (6612)

Normally translated “**simple**,” this word refers to a naivete or immaturity that is a result of one’s own choice and precursor to further digression into the condition of being a fool. The solution to the problems faced by the “**simple-minded**” is to learn and obey the Word of God (Psalm 19:7; 119:130). It was to deal with the problem of the “**simple-minded**” person that Proverbs was written (Pro. 1:4). As is found in the meaning of the other words which refer to the “**fool**,” personal choice is involved in the problem of being “**simple-minded**” (Pro. 9:4-6).

2. **kes-eel** (3684)

Appearing about fifty times in Proverbs, and about seventy times total in the Old Testament, this is the most commonly used Hebrew word which is translated “**fool**” in Proverbs. It means one who is dull (unable to discern things of value) and obstinate in moral judgments, not primarily referring to basic intelligence. It emphasizes one’s chosen outlook and choices and focuses on a propensity to make bad moral decisions. It seems to be the first step in the downward digression from being just a “**simple-minded**” person to developing the character of a “**fool**” (Proverbs 28:26).

## FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS

### *A study of what God has to say in Proverbs and the Old Testament about “Fools.”*

3. **saw-kal** (5528, 5530)

Even though this word is not found in Proverbs, **saw-kal** expresses an important characteristic of a “fool.” It means one who has a lack in a moral or spiritual sense, and most generally is used to indicate the practical atheism of a person who acts out of a dependence upon his own resources without a dependence upon God. See 1 Samuel 13:13; 26:21; 2 Samuel 24:10; 1 Chronicles 21:8 and 2 Chronicles 16:9.

4. **ev-eel** (191)

This Hebrew word means “*perverse,*” or “*morally deficient,*” and appears about nineteen times in Proverbs. Such a person is lacking in sense and is generally corrupt. He is not only perverse because of his choices (see **kes-eel** above), but he is also insolent and shows a haughty disregard for others and established authority. Thus, his deficiency is a sinful moral perversion, not a mental lack or stupidity. He despises wisdom, is impatient with discipline and does not have a proper fear of God.

5. **loots/lis** (3887)

Though **loots** is not translated “fool,” this Hebrew word seems to describe one of the most advanced class of “fools” and is found seventeen times in Proverbs, being often associated with the “fool” or contrasted with the “wise.” This word is derived from a root that means “*to make mouths at,*” or “*to blow.*” This word describes a character that is so degraded that he is odious to all around him (Pro. 24:9), and when he is expelled from a group, most problems cease to exist (Pro. 22:10).

6. **naw-bawl** (5036)

This word includes the concepts of both **kes-eel** and **ev-eel** and also emphasizes being ignoble and disgraceful. Such a fool’s insensibility to God as well as his moral insensibility has closed his mind to all reason. Though used only three times in Proverbs (17:7, 21; 30:22), this word is well known for its use in Psalms 14:1 and 53:1 where it says, “*The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.*” Most likely this type of “fool” is more advanced, or degraded, than any other type as we see from what he says.

As one studies the meanings and uses of these Hebrew words it becomes apparent that being a “fool” *is a progressive matter resulting from certain choices a person makes in life.* The pathway of self-destruction begins with choice to be “naive” or “simple-minded” about life and relationships. In so doing he chooses not to study, learn and obey the instructions God gives to him in His holy Word. Having begun his path, he is unable to discern value and is obstinate in moral judgments, he then continues with a practical form of atheism, becomes morally deficient and generally corrupt, closes his mind to all logic and reason, and even denies the very existence of God and finally becomes absolutely worthless.

There really is no good reason for a person to become such a “fool.” All that is needed for him to save himself from such self-destruction is to read, learn and obey what God tells him to do.

Studying what God tells us about a “fool” will also enlighten us as to how we should relate to such a person. While some of us may feel sorry for such people and think that we can change them, we may learn differently if we will also read, learn and obey what God tells us about relating to such people. One may come to the conclusion that he should not waste his precious time on such people if they refuse to do what God tells them to do. After all, each of us has only a certain amount of time and resources to use. The time and resources we invest in the lives of those who repeatedly refuse to do what God tells them and have chosen a path from which we cannot turn them might, at times, be better spent on those who will assume responsibility for themselves and make the choices that can result in a productive life.

One thing we all should learn from this study is that there are some people with whom we should not associate or allow to be in our group because they will almost always cause discord and destroy harmony and peace.

## FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS

### *A study of what God has to say in Proverbs and the Old Testament about “Fools.”*

#### DEFINITIONS

#### 2. **kes-eel** (3684)

Appearing about fifty times in Proverbs, and about seventy times total in the Old Testament, this is the most commonly used Hebrew word. It means one who is dull (unable to discern things of value) and obstinate in moral judgments, not primarily referring to basic intelligence. It emphasizes one's chosen outlook and choices and focuses on a propensity to make bad moral decisions. It seems to be the first step in the downward digression from being just a “**simple-minded**” person to developing the character of a “**fool**” (Proverbs 28:26).

**Definitive Verse:** Proverbs 28:26 **He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.**

#### STRONG'S ENHANCED DICTIONARY

**3684** – *kes-eel* n m. From 3688; TWOT 1011c; GK 4067; 70 occurrences; AV translates as “fool” 61 times, and “foolish” nine times. **1** fool, stupid fellow, dullard, simpleton, arrogant one.

#### THEOLOGICAL WORDBOOK OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The verb (3688) occurs only once, in Jeremiah 10:8, where idol worshipers are called “**foolish**”<sup>3688</sup>. The Arabic cognate seems to have an original meaning “to be sluggish,” referring to that which is thick, plump, or fat. A number of derivatives flow from this root.

**Fool, dullard.** This noun, except for three occurrences in Psalms, is found only in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. In Proverbs three words are rendered fool, *kes-eel*<sup>3684</sup> referring to the dull or obstinate one, referring not to mental deficiency, but to a propensity to make wrong choices. *ev-eel*<sup>191</sup> refers to moral insolence, and *naw-bawf*<sup>5036</sup> to the boorish man of mean disposition.

Folly and **fool**<sup>3684</sup> are opposite to wisdom and wise. *Kes-eel* refers to a way of life that is enticing to the immature, but can lead to destruction and ruin. Solomon sums up the argumentation for either wisdom or folly by stating that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness (Ecclesiastes 2:1–13). Involved in this conclusion is that wisdom leads a person on the right path to the brightness of the full day while folly entices one to the way that leads into darkness (Proverbs 4:18–19).

#### HIS CHOICES

We note the kind of choices which the *kes-eel* 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 (Proverbs 17:24).

Proverbs 17:24 *Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool<sup>3684</sup> are in the ends of the earth.*

The **fool**<sup>3684</sup> imagines that he can buy wisdom when actually he has no inclination for it (Proverbs 17:16).

Proverbs 17:16 *Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool<sup>3684</sup> to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?*

He takes no delight in understanding (Proverbs 18:2).

Proverbs 18:2 *A fool<sup>3684</sup> hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.*

He hates knowledge (Proverbs 1:22).

Proverbs 1:22 *How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fool<sup>3684</sup> hate knowledge?*

Therefore he does not choose the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:29).

Proverbs 1:29 *For that they [the fools] hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord*

The end of the **fool's**<sup>3684</sup> complacency is destruction (Proverbs 1:32).

Proverbs 1:32 *For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools<sup>3684</sup> shall destroy them.*

## FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS

### *A study of what God has to say in Proverbs and the Old Testament about "Fools."*

#### HE IS A SERIOUS MENACE TO THE COMMUNITY.

The **fool**<sup>3684</sup> is a serious menace to the community.

Associating with a **fool**<sup>3684</sup>, who has a twisted sense of values deprives one of knowledge (Proverbs 14:7).

Proverbs 14:7 *Go from the presence of a foolish<sup>3684</sup> man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.*

He can cause serious problems to his fellow man, for he actually enjoys doing wickedness or lewdness such as is seen in Leviticus 18:17 (Proverbs 10:23).

Proverbs 10:23 *It is as sport to a fool<sup>3684</sup> to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom.*

A **fool's**<sup>3684</sup> utterances bring strife and involve him in blows with his adversaries (Proverbs 18:6).

Proverbs 18:6 *A fool's<sup>3684</sup> lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.*

Anyone who befriends him will be destroyed (Proverbs 13:20).

Proverbs 13:20 *He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools<sup>3684</sup> shall be destroyed.*

Parents of the **fool**<sup>3684</sup> suffer greatly. His mother is grieved with him (Proverbs 10:1).

Proverbs 10:1 *The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish<sup>3684</sup> son is the heaviness of his mother.*

His father can never have any joy over him (Proverbs 10:1; see also Proverbs 17:25; 19:13a).

Proverbs 17:25 *A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bore him.*

Proverbs 19:13 *A foolish<sup>3684</sup> son is the calamity of his father:...*

The fool also despises his mother (Proverbs 15:20).

Proverbs 15:20 *A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish<sup>3684</sup> man despiseth his mother.*

#### INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE VERSES LISTED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES

Please take some time with each of the verses listed on the following pages to write your observations and comments in the spaces allowed between each verse answering the following questions:

1. What each verse says to me.
2. How this verse relates to what I am studying in this lesson.
3. How this verse applies to my life.
4. What does God want me to do as a result of reading this verse.
5. What I will do as a result of reading and studying this verse.

## FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS

### *A study of what God has to say in Proverbs and the Old Testament about "Fools."*

Psalm 49:10 For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the **fool**<sup>3684</sup> and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.

Psalm 92:6 A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a **fool**<sup>3684</sup> understand this.

Psalm 94:8 Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye **fools**<sup>3684</sup>, when will ye be wise?

Proverbs 1:22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and **fools**<sup>3684</sup> hate knowledge?

Proverbs 1:32 For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of **fools**<sup>3684</sup> shall destroy them.

## FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS

### *A study of what God has to say in Proverbs and the Old Testament about "Fools."*

- Proverbs 3:35     The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of **fools**<sup>3684</sup> .
- Proverbs 8:5     O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye **fools**<sup>3684</sup> , be ye of an understanding heart.
- Proverbs 10:1     The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a **foolish**<sup>3684</sup> son is the heaviness of his mother.
- Proverbs 10:18     He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a **fool**<sup>3684</sup> .
- Proverbs 10:23     It is as sport to a **fool**<sup>3684</sup> to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom.

## FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS

### *A study of what God has to say in Proverbs and the Old Testament about "Fools."*

Proverbs 12:23 A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of **fools**<sup>3684</sup> proclaimeth foolishness.

Proverbs 13:16 Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge: but a **fool**<sup>3684</sup> layeth open his folly.

Proverbs 13:19 The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but it is abomination to **fools**<sup>3684</sup> to depart from evil.

Proverbs 13:20 He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of **fools**<sup>3684</sup> shall be destroyed.

Proverbs 14:7 Go from the presence of a **foolish**<sup>3684</sup> man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.

## FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS

### *A study of what God has to say in Proverbs and the Old Testament about "Fools."*

Proverbs 14:8 The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of **fools**<sup>3684</sup> is deceit.

Proverbs 14:16 A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the **fool**<sup>3684</sup> rageth, and is confident.

Proverbs 14:24 The crown of the wise is their riches: but the foolishness of **fools**<sup>3684</sup> is folly.

Proverbs 14:33 Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: but that which is in the midst of **fools**<sup>3684</sup> is made known.

Proverbs 15:2 The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of **fools**<sup>3684</sup> poureth out foolishness.

## FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS

### *A study of what God has to say in Proverbs and the Old Testament about "Fools."*

Proverbs 15:7 The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the **foolish**<sup>3684</sup> doeth not so.

Proverbs 15:14 The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of **fools**<sup>3684</sup> feedeth on foolishness.

Proverbs 15:20 A wise son maketh a glad father: but a **foolish**<sup>3684</sup> man despiseth his mother.

Proverbs 17:10 A reproof entereth more into a wise man than a hundred stripes into a **fool**<sup>3684</sup>.

Proverbs 17:12 Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a **fool**<sup>3684</sup> in his folly.

## FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS

### *A study of what God has to say in Proverbs and the Old Testament about "Fools."*

Proverbs 17:16 Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a **fool**<sup>3684</sup> to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?

Proverbs 17:21 He that begetteth a **fool**<sup>3684</sup> doeth it to his sorrow: and the father of a **fool**<sup>5036</sup> hath no joy.

Proverbs 17:24 Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a **fool**<sup>3684</sup> are in the ends of the earth.

Proverbs 17:25 A **foolish**<sup>3684</sup> son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.

Proverbs 18:2 A **fool**<sup>3684</sup> hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.

## FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS

### *A study of what God has to say in Proverbs and the Old Testament about "Fools."*

Proverbs 18:6 A **fool's**<sup>3684</sup> lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.

Proverbs 18:7 A **fool's**<sup>3684</sup> mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.

Proverbs 19:1 Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a **fool**<sup>3684</sup>.

Proverbs 19:10 Delight is not seemly for a **fool**<sup>3684</sup>; much less for a servant to have rule over princes.

Proverbs 19:13 A **foolish**<sup>3684</sup> son is the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping.

## FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS

### *A study of what God has to say in Proverbs and the Old Testament about "Fools."*

Proverbs 19:29 Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of **fools**<sup>3684</sup>.

Proverbs 21:20 There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a **foolish**<sup>3684</sup> man spendeth it up.

Proverbs 23:9 Speak not in the ears of a **fool**<sup>3684</sup>: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.

Proverbs 26:1 As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honor is not seemly for a **fool**<sup>3684</sup>.

Proverbs 26:3 A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the **fool's**<sup>3684</sup> back.

## FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS

### *A study of what God has to say in Proverbs and the Old Testament about "Fools."*

Proverbs 26:4 Answer not a **fool**<sup>3684</sup> according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.

Proverbs 26:5 Answer a **fool**<sup>3684</sup> according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.

Proverbs 26:6 He that sendeth a message by the hand of a **fool**<sup>3684</sup> cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage.

Proverbs 26:7 The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable in the mouth of **fools**<sup>3684</sup>.

Proverbs 26:8 As he that bindeth a stone in a sling, so is he that giveth honor to a **fool**<sup>3684</sup>.

## FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS

### *A study of what God has to say in Proverbs and the Old Testament about "Fools."*

Proverbs 26:9 As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouth of **fools**<sup>3684</sup>.

Proverbs 26:10 The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the **fool**<sup>3684</sup>, and rewardeth transgressors.

Proverbs 26:11 As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a **fool**<sup>3684</sup> returneth to his folly.

Proverbs 26:12 Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a **fool**<sup>3684</sup> than of him.

Proverbs 28:26 He that trusteth in his own heart is a **fool**<sup>3684</sup> but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

## FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS

### *A study of what God has to say in Proverbs and the Old Testament about "Fools."*

Proverbs 29:11 A **fool**<sup>3684</sup> uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.

Proverbs 29:20 Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a **fool**<sup>3684</sup> than of him.

Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the **fool**<sup>3684</sup> walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.

Ecclesiastes 2:15 Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the **fool**<sup>3684</sup>, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 2:16 For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the **fool**<sup>3684</sup> forever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the **fool**<sup>3684</sup>.

## FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS

### *A study of what God has to say in Proverbs and the Old Testament about "Fools."*

Ecclesiastes 4:5 The **fool**<sup>3684</sup> foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh.

Ecclesiastes 4:13 Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and **foolish**<sup>3684</sup> king, who will no more be admonished.

Ecclesiastes 5:1 Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of **fools**<sup>3684</sup>: for they consider not that they do evil.

Ecclesiastes 5:3 For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.

Ecclesiastes 5:4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in **fools**<sup>3684</sup>: pay that which thou hast vowed.

## FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS

### *A study of what God has to say in Proverbs and the Old Testament about "Fools."*

Ecclesiastes 6:8 For what hath the wise more than the **fool**<sup>3684</sup>? what hath the poor, that knoweth to walk before the living?

Ecclesiastes 7:4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of **fools**<sup>3684</sup> is in the house of mirth.

Ecclesiastes 7:5 It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of **fools**<sup>3684</sup>.

Ecclesiastes 7:6 For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the **fool**<sup>3684</sup>: this also is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 7:9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of **fools**<sup>3684</sup>.

## FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS

### *A study of what God has to say in Proverbs and the Old Testament about "Fools."*

Ecclesiastes 9:17 The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among **fools**<sup>3684</sup>.

Ecclesiastes 10:2 A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a **fool's**<sup>3684</sup> heart at his left.

Ecclesiastes 10:12 The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a **fool**<sup>3684</sup> will swallow up himself.

Ecclesiastes 10:15 The labor of the **foolish**<sup>3684</sup> wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.