Fools & Simpletons
The Misguided Zeal of a Simpleton
Troy Knight

Key Scripture:

Proverbs 14:15 (NLT)
15 Only simpletons believe everything they're told!
The prudent carefully consider their steps.

Proverbs 22:3 (NLT)
3 A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions.
The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences.

Judges 10:6–16 (NLT)

Judges 11:1-10 (NLT)

Judges 11:29–31 (NLT)
29 At that time the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he went throughout the land of Gilead and Manasseh, including Mizpah in Gilead, and from there he led an army against the Ammonites. 30 And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD. He said, "If you give me victory over the Ammonites, 31 I will give to the LORD whatever comes out of my house to meet me when I return in triumph. I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering."

Judges 11:32–40 (NLT)

TALK IT OVER

Start talking. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Have you ever believed something that was false only later to find out you had been deceived or taught in error? How did you find out you were wrong?

Start sharing. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- Discuss the definition of a simpleton: someone easily deceived or persuaded. Is being a simpleton a life sentence or can we grow past it?
- **Read Proverbs 14:15 & 22:3**. What are some differences between a simpleton and prudent person? How would you classify yourself today?
- **Read Judges 10:6-16**. How was the Israelites repentance in verse 16 different from the "repentance" in verse 10?
- **Read Judges 11:1-10**. Does God choosing Jephthah as a judge surprise you? What made him a great choice as a deliverer of Israel?
- **Read Judges 11:29-31.** Have you ever made a promise or vow to God? What made Jephthah's vow so foolish and simple?
- **Read Judges 11:32-40**. If you had been Jephthah's daughter how would you have reacted to your dad's decision? How do the decisions of simpletons affect those they love?
- Troy said the prudent are not surprised by temptations, false teachings and evil in general. How do you protect yourself from areas of temptations where you know you are vulnerable?
- When you hear a questionable teaching or doctrine how do you check it for accuracy?
- How do the prudent prepare for "unexpected" emergencies? Are you being prudent?
- How do the prudent prepare for death and eternity?

Start doing. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Think about areas of your life where you need to practice prudence spiritually, financially and biblically

Start praying. Be bold and pray with power.

- Lord, forgive me for all the times I failed to seek your guidance first in all of my decisions. Please take control of my life and order my steps.

Question: "How does the Bible describe a fool?"

Answer:
The Bible has much to say about fools. The word *fool* today usually means "a senseless fellow, a dullard." The biblical definition has the added dimension of "someone who disregards God's Word." The Bible lists many characteristics of such a person, often contrasting him with one who is wise. Ecclesiastes 10:2 says, "The heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left." A fool is one whose wayward heart turns continually toward foolishness. "Fools speak foolishness and make evil plans" (Isaiah 32:6). Proverbs 26:11 says, "As a dog returns to its vomit, so fools repeat their folly." Fools do not learn their lessons from the mistakes they make. They continue doing the same foolish things over and over again, to their own destruction (Proverbs 18:7).

The following is a partial list of some characteristics of a fool from the book of Proverbs: a fool hates knowledge (Proverbs 1:22), takes no pleasure in understanding (Proverbs 18:2), enjoys wicked schemes (Proverbs 10:23), proclaims folly (Proverbs 12:23), spurns a parent's discipline (Proverbs 15:5), speaks perversity (Proverbs 19:1), is quick-tempered (Proverbs 12:16), gets himself in trouble with his proud speech (Proverbs 14:3), mocks at sin (Proverbs 14:9), is deceitful (Proverbs 14:8), and despises his mother (Proverbs 15:20). A foolish child brings grief to his or her parents (Proverbs 17:25; 19:13). A foolish man commits sexual immorality (6:32; 7:7–12). A foolish woman tears down her own house (Proverbs 14:1).

The ultimate description of a fool is one who "says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, and their ways are vile; there is no one who does good" (Psalm 14:1; 53:1). Although fools can choose to become wise by heeding wise counsel and applying it (Proverbs 8:5; 21:11), the Bible warns against associating with fools (Proverbs 14:7). Proverbs 13:20 says, "Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm."

There is an important distinction between the biblical definition of a fool and the word Jesus used (*raca*) in Matthew 5:22 when He forbade calling a Christian brother a "fool." The term *raca*, spoken from a heart of contempt, implied utter worthlessness. Jesus was not saying that we cannot call the choices of another foolish. But to call someone "raca" was saying that this person was beyond the reach of God and therefore condemned forever. To say, "You fool!" to a brother or sister in that day was the equivalent of saying, "Damn you!" to someone today. We do not have the power or the right to condemn anyone to hell. That position of judgment belongs only to God. A born-again Christian cannot be "damned" because he or she has been purchased by the blood of Christ (Colossians 1:14). We can and should, however, do all we can to turn the hearts of those exhibiting foolishness toward wisdom and possibly save their lives and their eternal souls (James 5:20).

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