

Wise Words Benefit the Teachable or to be Unreachable is to be a Fool

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[0 : 00] When you think about someone who is unteachable, someone who just thinks they know it all, and they just won't listen to wise counsel, what kind of person comes to mind?

Don't answer out loud. Don't call your husband's name or your parent's name or your teenager's name.

The truth is, any of us at any age, at any stage in life, can be unteachable.

Think we know it all. Unwilling to listen. Let me give you an example, a real-life example, practical example, that happened many years ago near where I grew up.

A man in his early 30s moved to the country, never lived in the country, never owned a tractor, but he bought one. Just like that one.

[1 : 16] Farm all, tricycle wheels. Well, he's got him a nice little place here, got his new tractor. He's got some tree stumps he's going to pull up.

And so he attaches a chain to those tree stumps, the other end of the chain to his tractor. And he's going to pull them up. Well, across the road, there's an older man who's farmed all his life.

He's been driving a tractor longer than this young man's been alive. And he sees what he's doing.

Now, I knew this man growing up very well.

He was kind of a man who minded his own business. He would not even think about, just out of the blue, telling you how to do anything. But he saw this young man across the street doing what I just said he was doing and knew that he didn't know what he was doing.

So this older man walked over there, got the man's attention. Young fella came up to him. And he said something along this line, I don't want to tell you how to do what you're doing.

[2 : 37] But I've been on tractors all my life. And if you continue out here like you're doing, you're going to try to pull up a stump and that tractor is going to come up and it may flip back over on you.

And I just want to try to prevent you from getting hurt. That's why I'm telling you this. That young man looked at him in the eye and said, I'm doing this and turned around and walked off and continued doing that.

Now, I didn't tell it in the first story. He did not flip it over. But it was just by the grace of God. The point I want to make is that young man, 30-something years old, had that new tractor and he thought he was going to be Farmer Dan.

He knew what he was doing, he thought. But he really didn't have a clue. He was clueless. And what was worse, he was unteachable.

He was unwilling to listen to that man who could have taught him and would have invested his life in this young man and taught him everything he knew. But he was unteachable.

[4 : 02] He was unwilling to listen. He didn't want to learn. That young man is one of the best examples I can think of of what the book of Proverbs calls a fool.

And the way I learned about that story, the older farmer and my dad were good friends and the older farmer told my dad, they actually lived very close, and my dad said, that young man's a fool. Because he was. He acted like what Proverbs calls a fool. Over the past several weeks, we've been looking at what Proverbs says about the power of our words.

And they are powerful, for good or bad. They can hurt. They can also help. Last week, we looked at how wise people use words to teach.

And we looked at two different kinds of teaching, positive teaching. We looked at how that's described in Proverbs as giving thoughtful, wise counsel. You can be a positive teacher and think.

[5 : 13] And the wisdom that you know God's given you, you've acquired, seek to pass it on. But there's another kind of teaching, negative teaching, giving constructive criticism.

Correcting. The book of Proverbs is filled with statements that stress the importance of both kinds of teaching, especially the correcting. But it equally emphasizes the necessity of us being teachable. And that's what we're going to look at this morning. Let's look first. Wise people are teachable. I can't imagine anybody in this room not wanting to be wise.

Not wanting to develop greater wisdom. One of the key characteristics of becoming wise, growing in the development of wisdom, is you've got to be teachable.

A wise person understands the value of listening to and learning from wise teachers. I want to bring up two verses from Proverbs that we looked at last week to show you what I'm talking about.

[6:19] From chapter 15, it says, Reproof simply means correction.

Or it can even be translated constructive criticism. The New Living Translation translates the word reproof in verse 31 as constructive criticism.

And the word correction in verse 32. These verses are telling us a wise person will listen when somebody, that they recognize to be wise, that they know, knows what they're talking about.

A wise person will listen. Because one of the characteristics of being a wise person is being teachable. Now let's go a step further.

A wise person will not only be teachable, but a real wise person will actually seek good counsel.

Seek godly counsel. I want you to look at Proverbs chapter 11.

[7:37] It says, Where there is no guidance, a people falls. But in an abundance of counselors, there is safety. And a similar, chapter 15, Without counsel, plans fail.

But with many advisors, they succeed. You see what he's saying? If you are a wise person, you don't think you know it all.

You don't think you have all the answers. You're going to seek other people who, if it's related to something about seeking to live your life in a way that pleases God, as a Christian, you're going to seek somebody who's a more mature Christian than you.

If it's something practical, like that man I was talking about, about using a tractor, you're going to find somebody who actually knows what he's doing and give you wisdom. A characteristic of maturity.

A characteristic of wisdom is not only to be open to being taught or being corrected, but it's also to actively seek out good help, wise counsel.

[8:52] Let's just pause here and I want you to think about yourself. You think about you. Do you show signs that you are a mature person or that you're growing in maturity?

Because you are open to correction. You'll listen to your parents, to your teachers, to a friend who's just more knowledgeable than you about something.

Are you willing to listen and change the way you think when you understand, when you hear, I'm wrong. Change the way you do things.

Do things differently because somebody wiser than you helps you understand there is a better way. Do you seek the counsel of people who are wiser and more experienced than you?

We've got a lot of people in here right now. You're in high school and you've always got friends you talk to. When you're really trying to learn something, figure something out, I hope you don't just talk to them and ask their opinion.

[10:06] Somebody who's never been there, done that. But I want us to think about all of us in this room. When you think about what you're going to do, let's think about money.

Everybody likes to think about money. Everybody's doing something with their money. Most people try to save and invest their money. Do you try to figure all that out yourself?

Or do you read and study and maybe ask somebody who knows a whole lot more than you, who's been more successful, for their advice? What about as you're raising your children?

Who are you seeking counsel, wisdom, guidance to help you lead your child? To help you to develop new skills that you want to learn?

Think about it. Are you really and truly teachable? Correctable? Do you seek out wise counsel? Or do you have a lot in common with that younger man with the tractor who didn't just not know what he was doing, but he didn't want to learn the correct way?

[11:28] He didn't want to listen to a man who had far greater experience and was willing to help him. Proverbs stresses the importance of listening and learning from wise counselors.

You need them in your life. I need them. The book also has a lot to say though about people who refuse to listen, people who are just not interested in learning and they are called fools.

So let's look at that. Fools are unteachable. I want us to look at how the word fool is used in Proverbs because some people you feel very uncomfortable.

Every time I brought it up or we've read a verse and I've said something about a fool, some of you have cringed. I can remember many, many years ago I was going to preach a sermon or had preached a sermon and talked about fools.

I mean, Lisa and I were young and we were riding down the road. She said something about you ought not use that word fool. That just didn't sound good.

[12:46] And lo and behold, a little bit later, we turned on the radio and there was a Billy Graham message and the title of it was something to do with a fool.

And I looked at her and I said, I love fools. Great word. Great word. She's not tried to correct me on preaching about fools ever since.

Now, when speaking of a person, as we read all these verses, and it's over 72 times, Proverbs uses the word fool or foolish or something like that.

The word fool describes someone who lacks wisdom really in varying degrees. But a fool is the opposite of a wise person. A fool is the opposite of a teachable person.

When the speaking of what a fool does, the word folly or foolishness is being used. They're referring to the opposite of wisdom. They talk about what a fool does in Proverbs.

[13:56] Somebody who is foolish or they talk about folly. They're talking about someone who acts contrary to wisdom. Now, the word fool is never used in Proverbs to describe someone who can't help being foolish.

foolish. The book of Proverbs is not describing someone who is mentally slow or challenged or just someone who's too young and immature to really understand what they're doing.

The book of Proverbs always uses the word to describe someone who knows better or someone who should know better than to do some of these foolish things that it talks about.

The fool in Proverbs is called a fool because of the choices. he makes. Ray Ortlund defines the word fool in a good way, I think.

Look at it. A fool is a thick-headed, stubborn dolt. He doesn't listen. He always knows better, always has an excuse.

[15:00] Nothing is ever his fault. That's a fool. As Proverbs uses the word. fool. Now, I know some of you want to stand up and yell at me and say, well, Jesus said you ought not use the word fool.

Let's look at what he actually said and how he said it. It's in Matthew chapter 5, verse 22. Jesus said, but I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.

Again, anyone who says to his brother, Raka, is answerable to the Sanhedrin, but anyone who says you fool will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Now, was Jesus condemning Solomon and other Old Testament writers for using the word? Absolutely not.

Jesus is not condemning all uses of this word because he even used it at times. In Matthew 23, he called the Pharisees blind fools.

[16:06] He told two of his disciples that they were being foolish in Luke chapter 24. What Jesus is condemning here is the use of angry words, words of contempt.

Words of being judgmental and really putting someone down and especially in anger. Look at it. Can you back it up to that verse in Matthew 5?

He's pointing out that murder begins in a person's heart with anger. And that anger is often expressed in words that attack a person.

you're on the offensive against the person in your angry words. And if they continue to build up sometimes, they come out in physical actions and the ultimate being murder.

We should be careful about using the word fool for sure. We should not call one another fools when we're mad, when we're angry, when we're trying to put them down, make them feel bad.

[17:20] We shouldn't use any kind of words like this, angry, words of condemnation, words to try to just cut someone down, tear someone down, anything like this.

But the words, the word fool in Proverbs is not used like that. It's talking about somebody who is just willingly unteachable.

Someone who is just, I know it all, and unwilling to listen. I want you to look at some of the ways it is used in the book of Proverbs.

These are some verses that highlight how a fool is unteachable. from Proverbs 12. The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.

He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe. A fool finds no pleasure in understanding, but delights in airing his own opinions.

[18 : 29] Let's just pause here and think about something. You've heard it said, that a young person, a teenager, may be spending some time on Fool's Hill.

Well, most all of us in this room, we've been there. Some of us took even a scenic tour of Fool's Hill. Can't you remember the time in your life when you thought your parents were the fools?

They didn't know anything. Your teachers were idiots. They didn't know what was going on in life. They weren't going to be telling you what to do. We've been there.

We've done that. What's real dangerous is if you still think that way. That's the danger. The way of a fool, look at it, seems right to him.

In other words, I know it all. I don't need anybody to tell me. I don't need to be taught. But a wise man listens to advice because a wise person knows I don't have all the answers.

[19 : 42] Let's move on. A similar type of person that God calls a fool is a person who rejects correction, refuses to learn from his mistakes.

Not somebody who's just plain unteachable, but somebody who rejects it, returns, doesn't learn from the hard lessons.

Look at some examples. Proverbs 23, do not speak to a fool for he will scorn the wisdom of your words. That's talking about somebody who has proven by their track record they're not going to listen.

They won't learn. They know it all. They're just a fool. And what Proverbs is saying is if you know somebody who's just that way to the core, don't even waste your breath. They've got to learn everything the hard way and then they don't learn.

Look at the next one from Proverbs 1. That's the second part. We're going to look at the full one a little bit later. Fools despise wisdom and discipline. A fool doesn't need to be corrected.

[20 : 46] They know it all. And then Proverbs 26, as a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his folly. He doesn't learn.

Doesn't learn lessons. Don't even learn lessons the hard way. Now, because we're on the subject, we need to look at another way the word fool is used in Proverbs.

It's not really about teaching. This is about anger. But because there is so much about a fool and anger, since we're on the subject, we need to look at it.

From Proverbs 20. To a man's, it is to a man's honor to avoid strife. But every fool is quick to quarrel. We ought to want to avoid conflict.

You know, sometimes you can't help it. Sometimes you just got to do it. It's the right thing to do. But nobody should relish it. No one should enjoy it. No one should just meet it head on because I like to have conflict.

[21 : 55] I like to be confrontational and have hostile feelings and words for people. That's foolish. Look at Proverbs 14.

A wise man fears the Lord and shuns evil, but a fool is hot-headed and reckless. A wise man fears the Lord.

A wise man realizes he's always living in the presence of God. A wise person wants to live and show reverence and respect to God and God's people. People created in the image of God.

God's word. God's ways. But a fool doesn't care. Doesn't think. Just hot-headed and reckless. And then the last one, 29.

A fool gives full vent to his anger. But a wise man keeps himself under control. A fool just lets it go. Explodes. Erupts.

[22 : 54] Gets it off his chest. Blows up like a grenade. Hurts everybody around. But he's had his say. That's a fool.

Proverbs is saying. Now I want you to just, I want you to stop and think. That the word of God says, if you are easily angered, quick-tempered, I don't take anything off nobody.

Always erupting in anger. You don't care. You don't mind saying all kinds of hurtful, profane, hateful words. The word of God says, you are a fool.

That's harsh. That's hard. But that's the reality. This is a fool according to the word of God. There's a common thread in all of this that we've been reading.

A fool's problem is his mouth. His uncontrolled tongue. His unguarded words. Look at it.

[24 : 07] A fool reveals himself to be a fool by his words. Proverbs 17. Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent and discerning if he holds his tongue. You know that common saying that's based on that better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak out and remove all doubt.

That's been attributed to more than one person. I don't know where it really comes from. But a fool's mouth, tongue, words gets him into trouble, gets her into trouble more than anything.

Look one more time at how Proverbs describes the fool and his words. See, what I want you to understand here is I know it. Some of this stuff, it can be convicting to all of us.

Certain ones. It can make you mad. You can take it as an insult. And so what I'm trying to do here is show there's just a whole lot of Scripture, words from God, that addresses this issue and points out that it really is serious.

It's something we need to take to heart because nobody wants to really be thought of as a fool. Look at these. Proverbs 29.

[25 : 30] Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him. Chapter 15.

The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly. A fool's mouth is his undoing, and his lips are a snare to his soul.

Now just think about what all we have seen. If a lot of what you've read on the screen describes you, be honest with yourself, be honest before God, and just admit, I've got a problem.

Now, whose fault is it? If you've got this problem, whose fault is it? Well, it's no one's fault but your own. And it doesn't matter what's happened in your life.

If you fit the description in any of these ways, it's just obvious. From Proverbs' perspective, I'm a fool.

[26 : 47] Don't blame your parents. Don't blame the environment you've been brought up in. Don't blame anyone. Don't blame your circumstances.

If you've caused problems for yourself or others because you've done foolish things, then you take responsibility. Don't say to God if you're going to confess your sin to God and seek His forgiveness, don't say, God, Lord, I'm guilty but, and if the Lord has convicted you, you need to go and make some things right with some people, admit you're wrong, ask for their forgiveness, don't go to them and say, I know I've been wrong but, accept full responsibility that's how we must always confess all of our sin.

Listen to Proverbs one more time about this from chapter 19. A man's own folly ruins his life yet his heart rages against the Lord.

It may be that right now you feel like you have messed up some major things in your life and you're just plain mad and you're mad at some people but it may be that you're mad at God.

You're mad at God because of the home he allowed you to be brought up in. You may be mad at God because who you're having to live with is your spouse or your child or your parent. You may be mad at God at the job you've got and you can't find anything else.

[28 : 14] And the result, and the truth is you're acting a fool at home or at work or with you certain people and you want to blame them. What the scripture is saying is if you are acting a fool it's because you are a fool by your own choice and the way you have chosen to respond to maybe hard situations and difficult people that you have to live with or be around.

But don't start blaming and pointing fingers and saying it's his fault it's her fault it's their fault it's this something's fault.

Admit God I have been a fool I'm acting a fool and I'm tired of it. I want your help I want to overcome this.

Let's move on quickly here's the way to overcome being foolish number one fear God that's what Proverbs repeats let's look at two of them the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. If you're tired of living like a fool acting like a fool maybe just in some areas of your life if you're tired of suffering the consequences of your actions or of your words then learn to fear God and first of all let's think about that means take God seriously.

[29 : 53] If you take God seriously you're going to think of Him more than just when you happen to come to church or when you're in some kind of desperate situation and then you think about

praying.

If we are truly God's children we're talking to Christians now we're truly God's children we do take Him seriously. He is real to us and we talk to Him we should talk to Him want to talk to Him listen to Him fellowship with Him hear His word put it into practice every day of our lives sometimes though we forget we get busy sooner or later as God's children we get convicted because we do take God seriously but if you take God seriously a part of this fearing God is you'll demonstrate true reverence and respect to Him and for Him because He is holy He is separate He is not like us He is Almighty God and He is pure He is perfect and we need to keep in mind we've looked at it every week in this series we're going to stand before Him one day and give an account of how we've lived and how we have used our words all true wisdom comes from

God wisdom is not something that just can be acquired true wisdom that the book of Proverbs is talking about is given by God it's a gift now while the book of Proverbs teaches much about wisdom and truth and life ultimate wisdom and truth and life is found in Jesus Christ that's the bottom line so I want to ask you this morning do you know that have you made that discovery do you have a real relationship with Him if you don't I want you to understand that the problem that you need to have solved is a right relationship with God first if you will admit to God that you need His salvation be willing to turn from your sin be honest with God about it put your trust in

Jesus that when He died on the cross He actually took your punishment that He paid the penalty for your sins if you'll trust Him call upon Him to come into your life and be your Savior He will do that it may be that you are a Christian but God has been convicting you of some of the attitudes some of the words some of the ways you've been living as just sort of a selfish I know it all I don't need to listen kind of way it may be that you truly have been living more like a foolish person than a wise person and right now God's just made it clear and maybe even broken you over it that's good that's healthy just confess it ask God to forgive you to cleanse you give you a fresh start this morning as you draw back closer to

Him surrender your life anew and afresh to Jesus Christ as your Lord you don't have to be a fool you don't have to live foolishly by God's grace you can change your life can change you can't do it yourself but He can do it and He does it through Christ He does it through His word He does it through His spirit so I want to encourage you if God's calling you you respond to Him you obey whatever He's calling you to do let's bow together in prayer right now and you just make the kind of commitment He's calling you to make would you pray with me dear God speak in a way that we all understand what we need to do how we need to respond Lord no one wants to be a fool wants to be looked at as living foolishly so show us how we should respond if you've shown us that that's how we are show us

[34 : 27] Father what we need to do this morning we might leave here not as unteachable fools but as faithful men women young people who know you and love you and want your way more than our own way in an attitude of prayer you listen to the Lord and respond to Him and if you'd like for me to pray with you during this time I'll be here at the front and be happy to do that but you listen to God and do what He tells you to do message Böyle to he hi h it it hiatsächlich h