

Characteristics of a Wise Person and a Fool in Proverbs

The book of Proverbs contrasts the difference in actions of a wise person versus a fool. The Proverbs speak for themselves. Sometimes the King James Version of the Bible is not as clear as another translation. In many places another translation is added to enhance understanding.

Proverbs 1:5:

A **wise man** will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto **wise** counsels:

Proverbs 1:5: New English Bible:

If the wise man listens, he will increase his learning, and the man of understanding will acquire skill.

Proverbs 1:7:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of **knowledge**: *but fools* despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 9:10:

The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of **wisdom**: and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom. Fear is understood from the context as being one of two things. First as being afraid, scared, terrified, troubled. The second, which is used here means to awe, to have great respect toward something or someone.

Proverbs 1:7 Rotherham:

The reverence of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge. Wisdom and correction the foolish have despised.

These Proverbs give us the starting point to knowledge and wisdom, having great respect for God. However, fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Despise – to look down on with contempt or aversion.

Despise denotes open contempt, with mockery. The act of one who, full of arrogance and self-esteem, condemns others, despises their gifts, aggravates their faults and infirmities, and disdains all acts of love and kindness from them: such a one, through pride, despises precept, admonition, and wisdom.*

Proverbs 3:5-7:

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Be not **wise** in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

Trust in the Lord, not in your personal limited wisdom.

Proverbs 3:35:

The **wise** shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of **fools**.

Proverbs 3:35 The Jerusalem Bible:

Honor is the portion of the wise, all that fools inherit is disgrace.

Proverbs 9:8,9:

Reprove not a **scorner**, lest he hate thee: rebuke a **wise** man, and he will love thee.

Give *instruction* to a **wise man**, and he will be yet **wiser**: teach a just *man*, and he will increase in learning.

Scorner – mocker, derider, scoffer. A frivolous and impudent person, who sets at nought and scoffs at the most sacred precepts and duties of religion, piety, and morals.*

Proverbs 10:8,10:

The **wise** in heart will receive commandments: but a prating **fool** shall fall.

He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow: but a prating **fool** shall fall.

Prating – to talk long and idly. To utter foolishly. Idiom; usually translated “a fool of lips.”*

Proverbs 10:8 Jerusalem Bible:

The heart that is wise is obedient to instruction, but the gabbing fool is heading for ruin.

“To wink with the eye” means you are selling one thing when you are telling about another.

Proverbs 10:14:

Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the **foolish** is near destruction.

Proverbs 10:14 Berkeley:

Wise men store up knowledge, but the mouth of the foolish hastens ruin.

Proverbs 12:15:

The way of a **fool** *is* right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel *is* **wise**.

Compare with Proverbs 3:7:

Be not **wise** in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

Proverbs 13:1:

A **wise** son *heareth* his father’s instruction: but a **scorner** heareth not rebuke.

Proverbs 13:1 New English:

A wise man sees the reason for his father’s correction: an arrogant man will not listen to rebuke.

Proverbs 13:1 Taylor:

A wise youth accepts his father’s rebuke: a young mocker doesn’t.

Proverbs 13:20:

He that walketh with **wise men** shall be **wise**: but a companion of **fools** shall be destroyed.

Proverbs 13:20 Spurrell:

Whoso walketh with wise men shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall become corrupted.

Proverbs 14:9:

Fools make a **mock** at sin: but among the righteous *there* is favour.

Same word as scorn in 9:8. Mock – to treat with contempt or ridicule. “To scorn” is an emotion involving both anger and disgust.*

Proverbs 14:9 Knox:

Fools make light of the guilt that needs atonement, and leave honest men to enjoy the Lord’s favor.

Proverbs 14:16:

A **wise man** feareth, and departeth from evil: but the **fool** rageth, and is confident.

Proverbs 14:16 Jerusalem:

The wise man sees evil coming and avoids it, the fool is rash and presumptuous.

Proverbs 15:5:

A **fool** despiseth his father’s instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.

Proverbs 15:5 Moffat:

A senseless fellow scorns his father’s counsel, but he who listens to reproof shows his good sense.

Proverbs 15:20:

A **wise** son maketh a glad father: but a **foolish** man despiseth his mother.

Proverbs 15:20 Lamsa:

A wise son makes his father happy, but a foolish son is a disgrace to his mother.

Proverbs 15:31:

The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the **wise**.

Proverbs 16:22,23:

Understanding *is* a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of **fools is** folly.

The heart of the **wise** teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.

Proverbs 16:22 The New American Bible:

Good sense is a fountain of life for its possessor, but folly brings chastisement on fools.

Proverbs 18:15:

The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the **wise** seeketh knowledge.

Proverbs 20:3:

It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every **fool** will be meddling.

Meddle – to be mingled with; with anger. Thus to become angry, to grow warm, to be irritated.*

Proverbs 20:3 Taylor:

It is an honor for a man to stay out of a fight. Only fools insist on quarreling.

Proverbs 24:23:

These *things* also *belong* to the **wise**. *It is* not good to have respect of persons in judgment [to administer justice, ordinance, statute*].

Proverbs 24:23 Knox:

More maxims of the wise. It is ill done, to let partiality sway thy judgment.

*William Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies, Kregel Publishing