

The Wise Woman vs. The Foolish Female Selected Scriptures

Introduction

Proverbs 14:1 states, *“The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands.”* This morning I want to make the differences between these two types women clear to you and to give some practical advice on how build your house instead of tearing it down with your own hands. The first thing I need to point out is that this verse is using the metaphorical meaning of the word house. While the Hebrew word bayit is used extensively for a physical building and so can be translated as house, dwelling or palace, it is also used in a figurative sense for the people that live in it and so translated as home, household and family. This verse not contrasting one woman that is using wood, hammer and nails to construct her domicile with another female that is attacking her house with crowbars and sledgehammers. The picture described is of a woman whose wisdom enables her to enlarge her household, teach her children and be a blessing to her husband contrasted with a female who by her foolishness is a curse to her husband, a detriment to her children and drives her family away.

The idea for this sermon has been on my mind for several months, but the subject has been on my mind for many years for I have met many wise women who have built their household, but I have also met many foolish females who have torn their families apart. The greatest tragedy in this is that most of the time those who were foolish believed they were wise even as their home collapsed around them. In addition, we live in a society which has increasingly given praise to the foolish female as being liberated to be herself while attacking the wise woman as being victimized by her gender. While what I have to say is directed at you ladies so that you may pursue wisdom and flee foolishness, it is also for you men too, for not only do the general principles of wisdom also apply to you, but you need to know how to encourage the women in your life toward wisdom and protect them from foolishness. This is especially true toward your own wife and daughters. If you are not married, the contrast will direct you ladies to the characteristics you need to develop in order to be a good wife and mother if God should bless you in that manner, and it will give you single men a better idea of what to look for in a potential wife.

Wisdom vs. Foolishness

The world promotes a different idea about wisdom and foolishness compared to how God defines and describes them. In many areas they are nearly opposite to each other which is why Paul states in 1 Corinthians 1:18 that *the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God*, and goes on to say in verse 20 that *God [has] made foolish the wisdom of the world*. This contrast is not just in the gospel, but also in acknowledging and worshiping of God for Paul states in Romans 1:22 that those who falter in this profess to be wise, but they instead become fools. This proud foolishness is not limited to just atheists, agnostics and those in false religions and cults, but also many who profess to be Christians but remain ignorant of what the Scriptures teach or reject that in favor of their own preferences.

As Proverbs 9:10 states, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”* The word for fear here, yir’â, includes the components of both terror and reverence in its meaning. There should be a proper terror of the Lord in the heart of every sinner because they stand condemned by the holy, righteous and just Creator. Such terror is a great motivation to repent and find a way to be reconciled with God. Those that find forgiveness and redemption through faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ will find that fear of the LORD changes from terror

to reverence. Their motivation to obey God is now out of love for Him and a deep and abiding desire to know, please, honor and glorify Him in all that they do.

According to Proverbs, the fear of the Lord is also the beginning of knowledge (1:7) and the instruction for wisdom (15:33) which will keep you away from evil (16:6) because it will cause you to hate evil (8:13). The benefits of the fear of the Lord include prolonged life (10:27, 14:27), satisfying sleep (19:23) and confidence in the future because of trust in the Lord (14:26). The fear of the Lord is something you choose, and those that do not do so are those who hate knowledge and refuse wisdom (1:24, 29).

Wisdom in these verses is from *chokmâ* (khok-maw') which refers to a manner of thinking and attitude concerning life's experiences which included both general interests and basic morality. It is used in reference to the entire range of human experience from technical skill and craftsmanship to battle tactics and government administration. Another Hebrew word translated as wisdom and often used as a synonym is *sākal* which "*relates to an intelligent knowledge of reason.*" It is the ability to think through complex matters and see what lies behind them and so make wise decisions about them.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, wisdom is tied to the revelation of God and His will of what is holy, righteous and just, and so it differs greatly from the Greek concept which was theoretical and speculative. In true wisdom, human will and understanding is submissive to God's will and revelation for wisdom resides in God (Job 12:13). The wisdom spoken about throughout the wisdom literature of the Old Testament subjects the practical things learned from human experience to the revelation of God so that man can live the best possible moral and ethical life. Wise behavior is performing actions according to God's standards.

There are several levels of foolishness. The first is *kesil* (kes-eel') which describes those who are dull and obstinate in their proclivity to make wrong choices. Among the behaviors and characteristics described in Proverbs by this word are hating knowledge (1:22), being complacent (1:32), displaying dishonor (3:35), spreading slander (10:18), being arrogant and careless (14:16), being without sense (17:16), revealing their own mind instead of delighting in understanding (18:2), can be perverse in speech (19:1), and consume their resources up (21:20). Because of these various traits, they proclaim folly to others (12:23) and display it in how they live (13:16), so they will suffer harm (13:20). A boisterous woman is this kind of fool being naive, ignorant and gullible (19:13).

The next level of foolishness is *ewil* (eh-wil) or *iwwelet* (iw-weh'-let) meaning "thick" "thick-brained" "stupid," denoting a person that is morally deficient lacking in sense and being generally corrupt. Among the behaviors and characteristics described in Proverbs by this word are: despising wisdom and instruction (1:7), lack understanding (10:21), being right in their own eyes (12:15), quick tempered (14:17), deceitful (14:8), rejecting discipline (15:5), lacking sense (15:21), speaks before listening (18:13), rages against the Lord (19:3), quarreling (20:3) and stubborn (27:22). These characteristics will lead to their ruin by their own words and actions (10:10, 14) for they proclaim folly and display it in how they live (12:23; 13:16). A woman who has this type of foolishness destroys her own home by her own hands (14:1).

The worst level of foolishness is *nabal* (naw-bawl'). It includes the aspects of both the other types of foolishness, but continues on to ignoble and disgraceful being insensible to God and morality. It is a person with a closed mind. Such a fool exalts himself (30:22) while denying God (Psalm 14:1).

Wise Woman vs. Foolish Female

Proverbs 14:1 states, "*The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands.*" The foolishness here does not have to descend all the way down to the level of being a *nabal* (naw-bawl') for this to happen. All it really takes is being "thick brained" - proud and stubborn. If that is augmented by being naive and lacking understanding, the destruction will occur faster.

Wisdom and folly are both personified and contrasted in the early chapters of Proverbs. The first contrast between the wise woman and the foolish female is whether they listen to wisdom or folly.

In Proverbs 1:20-33, wisdom actively seeks out and shouts to warn the naive, scoffers and those at the first level of foolishness to turn aside and learn from her, but few listen. In Proverbs 8:1-36, wisdom publically calls out to the naive and those moderately foolish and offers them hope in life and great rewards if they will turn to heed her voice. Wisdom does not call out to the scoffers for they have already rejected her earlier warning. In Proverbs 9:1-12 wisdom sends her maidens out to invite the naive to her home to partake of her feast. Neither scoffers nor fools are invited for they have both turned away from wisdom's earlier efforts toward them. The woman who desires to be wise must heed Wisdom's warning, respond to her call and accept her invitation to her home where ignorance will be removed and be replaced by understanding, discernment and prudence and the blessings they bring.

In Proverbs 9:13-18, Folly also gives an invitation to the naive to come to her home. She does not have to invite the fools and scoffers for they are already dining there on a regular basis. The specific target of Folly's are the naive who "*are making their paths straight*" (9:15). These are people who are trying to walk a straight path in doing what is right, but because they determine what is right by their own standards, they will end up walking a crooked path and not even recognize it. Folly's enticements are attractive to man's sinful and selfish nature, but those who go to her home are in grave danger for "*the dead are there, [That] her guests are in the depths of Sheol*" (9:18). Whether you become a wise woman or remain a foolish female will depend on whose voice you listen to and heed. Here are some contrasts between the wise woman and the foolish female.

Wisdom begins with the fear of the LORD, but foolishness rejects the eternal perspective demanded by that and instead either fears man or is so caught up in immediate circumstances that they do not give adequate consideration to their end. The wise woman will turn from her sin and put her faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, God in human flesh who lived a sinless life then willingly died as the substitute payment for sin and rose again physically proving His claims about Himself and promises of redemption, forgiveness and a future eternity with Him in heaven are true. The foolish female either rejects or ignores Jesus, or gives a feigned profession of faith in Him, and may even pursue cultural aspects of Christianity, but will remain Biblically ignorant of Him and His commands. The wise woman will actively pursue an increasing knowledge of Jesus Christ desiring to understand His will and willingly submit to obey it to the best of her abilities. If a foolish female does study the Bible she will not interpret according to its context by a historical, grammatical hermeneutic, but will instead find those that will tickle her ears with what she wants to hear. She will twist the meaning of the Scriptures to fit with what she desires for herself. Her lack of actual love for the Lord Jesus will be demonstrated by her unwillingness to obey His commands. The wise woman strives to live in holiness in the present with an eye on eternity because her hope is in Christ Jesus. The foolish female lives in the present as she desires with her hope in her own abilities to manipulate circumstances to her favor. The wise woman will be a godly influence upon those around her and be grieved by the ungodliness around her. She welcomes correction that enables her to move away from sin and become more like her Lord. The foolish female will be affected by and moved toward the ungodly influences around her. She rejects correction and will dishonor and hate those that attempt to reprove her. She begins by walking in the counsel of the ungodly, and will soon be standing with the sinners and will in the end be seated with the scoffers.

In short, the wise woman welcomes and pursues anything that will help her better know, love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Her goal in life is His glory and honor. The foolish female pursues the fulfillment of her own selfish desires. If she professes to be a Christian, the glory and honor of the Lord will be secondary to her own proud and foolish ideas about what she thinks is best.

Wise Wife vs. Foolish Frau

Many women are and will remain single, and all that I have said so far directly applies to you and to

every man here too. But there are many of you who are married or will be married in the future and there are some additional truths that apply to you. Will you be a wise wife or a foolish Frau? (Frau is a German for a wife). You will be either a blessing or a curse to your husband as stated succinctly in Proverbs 12:4 - *“An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, But she who shames him is like rottenness in his bones.”*

On the blessing side, an excellent wife is hard to find and her worth is far above jewels (Prov. 31:10), but those that do find a wife find a good thing and obtain favor from the LORD (Prov. 18:22), because a prudent wife is from the LORD (Prov. 19:14). On the negative side, *bad company corrupts good morals* (1 Cor.15:33), and to the degree that the foolish Frau is wicked, she will bring trouble and the curse of the Lord on her house (Prov. 3:33, 15:6).

The greatest indicator of wisdom or foolishness is in the fulfillment of the role God has established for a wife from the very beginning. In Genesis 2:18 God said it was not good for man to be alone, so He fashioned one of Adam’s ribs into a woman for the express purpose that she would be a *“helper suitable to him.”* Eve would correspond as a match for Adam and would assist him in carrying out the responsibilities God has given to Adam in having dominion over the earth and its creatures. Together they would fill the earth and be God’s regents over it (Genesis 1:28).

Paul gives further instruction in Ephesians 5:22-33 explaining that God established the husband as the head of the wife and he is to love her as Christ loved the church. The wife is to be in willing submission to her husband just as the church is to Christ. The reason for both of these is that though it is a great mystery, the marriage relationship is to be a picture of Christ and the church. In addition, the husband is to love his wife as his own body since she is actually joined to him. He is to also love her as he loves himself, and she is to respect her husband.

The wife’s role is easily carried out if her husband is fulfilling his roles, but as 1 Peter 3:1-2 point out, she is to fulfill her role even if it is difficult because he is being disobedient to the word. Her goal then must be to win him without a word by her chaste and respectful behavior. In other words, no nagging or berating, only godliness. Even her adornment is not to be merely external, though that would be contrary to the focus most women have on fashion. Instead, her true beauty is to be *“the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle, and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God”* (1 Peter 3:3-4).

Admittedly the God given role for the wife is now attacked in our society and I am considered by some to be a horrible male chauvinist for even saying it, but that only reveals how much the evil influence of feminism, which is not feminine, has penetrated our nation. But God, not society or the Supreme Court, established both marriage and its parameters. The wisdom or foolishness of a wife will be determined by either her diligence to fulfill her Biblical role or her rejection of it.

The wisdom or foolishness of a wife is also seen in how well she matches either the characteristics described in Proverbs 31:10-31 or in the contrasts to them. Let me point out the contrasts in some of these areas for you. Proverbs 31:11-12 points out that a wise wife can be trusted for she will do her husband good and not evil and so they will have no lack of gain as explained in the rest of the passage. She will also cause him to gain in wisdom because *“Those that walk with the wise will be wise”* (Prov. 13:20). The husband of a foolish Frau will not be able to trust her for she lacks a good character and will bring him harm for a variety of reasons as will be explained. It is not that she will have all these negative traits, but any of them can cause problems and *the companion of fools will suffer harm* (Prov. 13:20).

Trust is a critical factor in establishing a good marriage or any relationship. If she is loose with the truth instead of honest, then she will be treacherous (Prov. 14:25) and can even *spread strife among brothers* (Prov. 6:19). Lying is closely associated with the deceit of flattery which lays a trap for its victim (Prov. 26:24, 27:6; 29:5), slander which separates even intimate friends (Prov. 16:28), and gossip which keeps contention burning (Prov. 26:20). The wise bind truth around them, write it in their hearts so that their lips are established forever (Prov. 3:3, 12:19). The foolish seek a short term gain through a

lie (Prov. 12:19) but they destroy their future for they will not escape God's punishment which comes as a consequence (Prov. 19:5,9) including a strained relationship with her husband.

According to Proverbs 31:13-19, the wise wife is industrious, prudent, diligent, entrepreneurial, strong, attentive, and a hard worker. She is described in these verses as rising early and going to bed late making sure her family is well provided and cared for. She works with her hands to make what is needed, but also involved in real estate transactions and a farming business.

The foolish Frau has opposite characteristics. She is described in Proverbs 26:14, "*As the door turns on its hinges, So does the sluggard on his bed.*" She is lazy and so accomplishes little becoming a drain on resources that puts the family at risk (Prov. 19:15). She fails to plan for the future and does not take action to fulfill present responsibilities resulting in want and suffering in the future (Prov. 20:4; 24:30-34). She craves, but doesn't get it because she is not willing to do the work necessary. This easily leads to grumbling, complaining and contention which becomes like a constant dripping to her husband driving him to prefer to live in a corner of the roof or out in the desert somewhere far, far away (Prov. 19:13; 21:9, 19). That is often the reason many men will stay late at work or may become excessively involved in a hobby. They avoid their wife by staying away from home. When I was a pastor in California, I was counseling a man who was a new Christian and had such a wife, and when he read these Proverbs for the first time he asked me if that meant he could leave her and move out to the Mojave desert. How I wish I could have said yes to him out of compassion for what he was suffering at home at the mouth of his wife.

Proverbs 31:20-22 describe the wise wife as compassionate, confident and elegant. Her industriousness allows her to help the poor and the needy, which is actually one of the reasons Christians work according to Ephesians 4:28. It also gives her confidence for the future because her household is clothed properly, and she is even able to dress herself in elegance. On the other hand, the slothfulness of a foolish Frau consumes the wealth of her household and can even put them at risk of being among the poor and hungry (Proverbs 19:15). Her elegance is described in Proverbs 11:22, "*As a ring of gold in a swine's snout So is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion.*"

Some more characteristics of the wise wife from Proverbs 31:23-27 include being admirable, dignified, wise, watchful and a merchant. Her diligence in looking after her household allows her and her husband to have greater involvement in their community. She is a merchant who manufactures and trades. She is personally dignified and opens her mouth in wisdom to teach others. Her husband is able to "*sit at the gate*" as a community leader because of her.

The husband of a foolish Frau cannot do this because he has trouble at home and she brings shame on him (Prov. 12:4). She is idle and wastes her time on frivolous things making it easy to fall into being a gossip and busybody (1 Tim. 5:13). She is fearful and rumors obstruct her from action (Prov. 22:13). She opens her mouth and it spouts folly (Prov. 15:2). Woe to those who listen to her!

These characteristics of a wise wife result in her being honored, respected, godly and acclaimed (Proverbs 31:28-31). She is honored and praised by her children, husband and the rest of the community as they see the fruit of her work. All of these characteristics develop because she is primarily a woman that fears the LORD. Godly character traits are developed because the individual has a godly heart.

The foolish Frau brings shame on herself and her household because she is ungodly at heart. She is selfish and proud, so much so that she "*is wiser in her own eyes Than seven men who can give a discreet answer*" (Proverbs 26:16). Those who try to correct her will receive dishonor and insults from her (Proverbs 9:7).

The tragedy is that our society seems to have an increasing number of foolish Fraus and a decreasing number of wise wives. If you want to be wise, then humble yourself to believe and trust the Lord Jesus Christ. Make it your goal to know Him and submit to His will. Then be sure to seek instruction in wisdom from those that are godly and wise that you may be wise, and be thankful for those who correct and even rebuke you (Proverbs 9:8-9).

Wise Mother vs. Foolish Mama

My final category this morning is a wise mother verses a foolish mama. Everything I have said so far also applies to those who are mothers, but there are additional responsibilities that you have that will reveal your level of either wisdom or foolishness.

First, understand that despite the disdain much of society seems to now have for those women who commit themselves to their role as a mother as if it is somehow inferior to a job in the paid workforce, you have been blessed by God and will receive the joy of that blessing if you will follow His commands in raising your children. Psalm 127:3,

“Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.”

The primary task of parenting is to raise the children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). This requires you to love God with all your heart, soul and might and then diligently teaching your children about the LORD and His commands in every situation of life so they might love and obey Him (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). A wise mother will humbly seek and accept the help of others in carrying out this responsibility, but will never abdicate it to others. One of the great contributors to the moral decline of our nation has been parents yielding the training of their children to educational institutions, media, peers and clubs. If your influence on your children is not substantially greater than the sum total of the influence from all other sources, then you will fail as a parent.

Five different Proverbs state that a wise son will make you glad, but your child will not be wise unless he is taught by those who are wise, and that requires you to be wise. Children are naturally foolish to begin with because they come to us as sinners. You must follow God’s instructions if you are to remove the foolishness and replace it with wisdom. If you follow the advice of fools or yield your children to be trained by fools, do not be surprised that they remain foolish and cause you great grief. It is that grief and shame that has caused so many parents to regret having children and is a major factor in young couples being hesitant to have children as they hear and see the horror stories.

To be a wise woman, to be a wise wife, to be a wise mother, all you really have to do is be humble to believe and trust God and follow His commandments. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Love for the Lord as demonstrated in your submission to Him will enable you to walk in the wisdom that will enable you to build your house and avoid the foolishness of the female that tears her household down with her own hands.

Sermon Notes: *The Wise Woman vs. The Foolish Female*
Selected Scriptures

Introduction

Proverbs 14:1, “*The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own _____.*”

A wise woman is a blessing that enlarges her household; a foolish female is a _____ that drives them away
_____ blocks people from seeing their own foolishness, and our society promotes foolishness

Wisdom vs. Foolishness

God’s wisdom is foolish to the _____, & the world’s wisdom is foolish to God - 1 Cor. 1:18f, Rom. 1:18f

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom - A _____ to unbelievers and reverence to believers

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, instruction for wisdom, will keep you away from _____

Wisdom is the _____ knowledge properly to life’s situations according to the revelation of God’s will

kesil (kes-eel') describes those who are dull and obstinate in their proclivity to make _____ choices

ewil (eh-wil) denotes a person that is morally deficient, _____ in sense and being generally corrupt

nabal includes other types of foolishness, but is also _____, disgraceful & insensitive to God & morality

Wise Woman vs. Foolish Female

A foolish female tears down her own household by pride and _____ - ignorance will speed it up

Proverbs 1:20-33 - wisdom shouts her _____ in the streets to turn aside and learn from her - few do

Proverbs 8:1-36 - wisdom calls publically to _____ and reward to those that will heed her - few do

Proverbs 9:1-12 - wisdom invites the _____ to partake of her feast - scoffers & foolish are excluded

Proverbs 9:13-18 - Folly’s invites the naive appealing to man’s sinful & selfish nature - _____ is in her house

Wisdom begins with the fear of the LORD; Folly _____ or ignores Him

Wisdom turns from sin to _____ in Jesus Christ; Folly rejects, ignores or feigns allegiance to Jesus

Wisdom actively pursues knowing and submitting to Christ; Folly rejects or _____ Scriptures to own desire

Wisdom pursues holiness in the present with an eye to _____; Folly living in the present only

Wisdom influences _____ toward godliness; Folly is influenced to become like the evil people around her

The wise woman pursues the Lord Jesus Christ; The foolish female pursues her own _____ desires

Wise Wife vs. Foolish Frau

“*An excellent wife is the _____ of her husband, But she who shames him is like rottenness in his bones.*”

Wisdom or foolishness is determined by the fulfillment of God’s _____ for a wife - *a helper suitable to him*

The husband is the _____ and is to love his wife as Christ loved the church; she is to submit to that headship

She is to _____ her role even if the husband does not - 1 Peter 3:1-4 (And vica versa)

Though increasingly difficult in our society, it is still _____ standard and therefore the measure of wisdom

Proverbs 31:10-31 sets out a standard for the wise wife; the _____ characterizes the foolish Frau

valuable, _____, source of gain, blessing, VS common, dishonest, liability, curse

industrious, prudent, diligent, strong, attentive, VS slothful, sluggard, _____, contentious

_____, confident and elegant, VS self-centered, fearful, a gold ring in a swine's snout

admirable, _____, wise, watchful and a merchant, VS idle, gossip, busybody, foolish

honored, respected, godly and acclaimed, VS _____, pride, dishonor and insults

If you want to be wise, _____ yourself to believe and trust the LORD and submit to His will

Wise Mother vs. Foolish Mama

Motherhood is a great _____ despite society's perverse view of what is important - Psalm 127

The primary task of parenting is to raise the children in the discipline and instruction of the _____ (Eph. 6:4)

A wise mother humbly accepts help of others, but never _____ her responsibility to others

Wise children will make you _____, but that requires wise parents

Foolish children will cause you _____ and shame - you must follow God's instructions to remove foolishness

Love for the LORD enables to walk in the _____ that builds your household and avoid tearing it down

KIDS KORNER

Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help.

Young Children - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. **Older Children** - Do one or more of the following: 1) Write down all the verses mentioned in the sermon and look them up later. 2) List how many times references are made to wisdom and foolishness. Talk with your parents about how you can learn to be wise and overcome foolishness.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. What is wisdom? How does godly wisdom differ from worldly wisdom? What are the three levels of foolishness (Hebrew word definitions)? How available is wisdom according to Proverbs 1:20-33; 8:1-36 and 9:1-12? How is the invitation of Folly (Proverbs 9:13-18) similar to and yet different from the invitation of Wisdom? What is the fear of the LORD and what are its benefits? What is the response of a wise woman to Jesus Christ? What are the possible responses of a foolish female to Him? What is the primary responsibility of a godly wife? What are her primary roles according to the Scriptures? Contrast the character traits of a wise wife as expressed in Proverbs 31:10-31 with those of a foolish Frau. What is the primary responsibility of a godly mother? What will be required of her in order to raise Godly children? What will be the result if she fails? Why should she avoid yielding her responsibility to others?