

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 how to avoid being a fool and 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. **neth-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 (Proverbs 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**" (Proverbs 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).

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 (Proverbs 24:9), and when he is expelled from a group, most problems cease to exist (Proverbs 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.

Loots/lis #3887

Though it is not translated “fool,” this word seems to describe one of the most advanced phases of a “fool” and is found a total of 27 times in 26 verses including 17 times in Proverbs associated with the “fool” or contrasted with the wise. This word is derived from a root that means “*make mouths at,*” or “*to blow.*” His character is so degraded that he is odious to all around him (Proverbs 24:9), and when he is expelled from a group, most problems cease (Proverbs 22:10).

STRONG’S ENHANCED DICTIONARY

3887 *luwts* /loots/ a verb. A primitive root; TWOT 1113; There are 27 occurrences; The KJV translates this Hebrew word as “scorner” 14 times, “scorn” four times, “interpreter” twice, “mock” twice, “ambassadors” once, “derision” once, “mock” once, “scornful” once, and “teachers” once. **Outline of Biblical Usage:** **1** to scorn, make mouths at, talk arrogantly. **2** to boast. **3** to mock, deride. **4** to interpret (language). **6** interpreter (participle). **7** ambassador (fig.). **8** to be inflated, scoff, act as a scorner, show oneself a mocker.

THEOLOGICAL WORDBOOK OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

“**Fools**” scorn and mock at sin (Proverbs 14:9) and judgment (Proverbs 19:28). The “**scorner**” (participial form) himself may be described as proud and haughty (Proverbs 21:24), incorrigible (Proverbs 9:7), resistant to all reproof (Proverbs 9:8; 15:12), and hating any rebuke (Proverbs 13:1). Wisdom and knowledge easily elude him (Proverbs 14:6).

So despicable is the “**scorner**” that he may be labelled as odious to all men (Proverbs 24:9). Therefore he must be avoided (Psalms 1:1) by all who would live godly lives. Further, he should be punished by hitting so that the easily persuaded naive fool may benefit from the lesson (Proverbs 19:25; 21:11).

One good way to remove contention from a group is to eject the scorner, and then “*strife and reproach will cease*” (Proverbs 22:10). A prepared judgment awaits all such scorners (Proverbs 19:29), for their trademark of life has been “*to delight*” in their scorning (Proverbs 1:22). They shall be brought to nothing and consumed (Isaiah 29:20).

That the particular type of wickedness of the scorner is pride is suggested by Proverbs 3:34. Here the scorner is contrasted with the humble. In this verse the Septuagint renders “**scorner**” by “**proud**” which is followed in the New Testament James 4:6 and I Peter 5:5. See Proverbs 21:24.

Among the various mockers and scorners are wine (Proverbs 20:1), the proud (Psalms 119:51), the king of Samaria’s henchmen, where a different word, 3945, related to 3887, is used (Hosea 7:5), and Job’s friends (16:20).

As one form of a participle, the word means an “**interpreter**,” such as Joseph used to fool his brothers (Genesis 42:23). The interpreters in Isaiah 43:27 are the teachers of Israel, God’s priests and prophets who have sinned by refusing to give out God’s word as he first gave it. In II Chronicles 32:31, the word represents “**ambassadors**” or representatives of Babylon who have a “**scornful**” view of Judah.

The most interesting text is Job 33:23. Elihu speaks of God graciously teaching men through the discipline of suffering the more perfect path of the Lord. Then God sends an angel, i.e. a messenger otherwise known as an “**interpreter**,” ambassador, or even a mediator to show man what is right.

Genesis 42:23 And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an **INTERPRETER**.

2 Chronicles 32:31 Howbeit in the business of the **AMBASSADORS** of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.

Job 16:20 My friends **SCORN** me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God.

Job 33:23 If there be a messenger with him, an **INTERPRETER**, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness:

Psalms 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the **SCORNFUL**.

Psalms 119:51 The proud have had me greatly in **DERISION**: yet have I not declined from thy law.

Proverbs 1:22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the **SCORNERS** delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

Proverbs 3:34 Surely he **SCORNETH** the **SCORNERS**: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.

Proverbs 9:7 He that reproveth a **SCORNER** getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot.

Proverbs 9:8 Reprove not a **SCORNER**, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.

Proverbs 9:12 If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou **SCORNEST**, thou alone shalt bear it.

Proverbs 13:1 A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a **SCORNER** heareth not rebuke.

Proverbs 14:6 A **SCORNER** seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.

Proverbs 14:9 Fools make a **MOCK** at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.

Proverbs 15:12 A **SCORNER** loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise.

Proverbs 19:25 Smite a **SCORNER**, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.

Proverbs 19:28 An ungodly witness **SCORNETH** judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity.

Proverbs 19:29 Judgments are prepared for **SCORNERS**, and stripes for the back of fools.

Proverbs 20:1 Wine is a **MOCKER**, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

Proverbs 21:11 When the **SCORNER** is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.

Proverbs 21:24 Proud and haughty **scorner** is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath.

Proverbs 22:10 Cast out the **SCORNER**, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.

Proverbs 24:9 The thought of foolishness is sin: and the **SCORNER** is an abomination to men.

Isaiah 28:22 Now therefore be ye not **MOCKERS**, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord **GOD** of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth.

Isaiah 29:20 For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the **SCORNER** is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off:

Isaiah 43:27 Thy first father hath sinned, and thy **TEACHERS** have transgressed against me.