

March 6, 2022

## I Am That Fool I'm Wise In My Own Eyes

The Book of Proverbs frequently compares the way of the wise with the way the fool.

Most of these seem self-evident while I am reading them, so much so that I tend to place myself automatically among the wise rather than among the fools.

But here is the problem with that.

*Proverbs 26:12 (NIV) Do you see a person wise in their own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for them.*

Don't be wise in your own eyes is a theme that comes up repeatedly in Proverbs. Do you see the problem here:

While reading proverbs, you can't keep thinking you are among the wise, without being wise in your own eyes. And yet we tend to do this.

Jesus told a story about two men praying. One was a sinner asking for mercy. The other was a religious Pharisee. The two prayers could not be more different.

*Luke 18:11–12 (NIV) The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'*

It is clear that the Pharisee was “Wise in his own eyes?”. Even though you can be sure the Pharisee was very familiar with the Proverb not to be wise in his own eyes. I believe this kind of thing sneaks up on everyone, not just the Pharisee. How does that happen? Here is the thing.

Arrogance is self-deceiving. Arrogant people don't think they are arrogant. They think they are right.

**This series is uncomfortable to teach because “I'm that fool!” But to NOT admit that I'm that fool is more dangerous than admitting it.**

We will be looking at 5 common ways we tend to be foolish. But this is not to condemn me or you. I intend to help us see that if we can admit our foolishness, there is the good news of hope, and real help available.

1. I'm wise in my own eyes
2. I don't like discipline
3. I'm defensive when corrected
4. I trust myself
5. I vent my anger

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus shocked his audience with this statement!

*Matthew 5:20 (NIV) For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

In Jesus day, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were known for their extremely strict standards of righteousness.

So, Jesus' statement shocked the audience by saying this. Whatever the audience thought, Jesus challenged the righteousness of the Pharisees in very specific ways in the next 6 paragraphs of his message. He challenged their interpretation, and their externalized approach because it was completely wrong!

Righteousness is achievable the way the Pharisees thought. One of their problems is a common one.

## I. I make wrong COMPARISONS

*2 Corinthians 10:12 (NIV) ... When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.*

**Seems like everyone taught their children to sing** (to the tune of Frere Jaques,) *"I am special, I am special, look at me, look at me."* Don't we already think too much of ourselves by default? Aren't we already self-centered enough?

### **Our Self-Concept Mirror Is Warped**

*A woman was sitting in the waiting room for her first appointment with a new dentist. She noticed his diploma on the wall. She suddenly remembered that a tall, handsome, dark-haired boy with the same name as on the diploma had been in her high school class so many years ago. She wondered, Could this dentist be that same guy, the guy I had a crush on way back then?*

*She quickly discarded any such thought when she met the balding, gray-haired dentist with the deeply lined face. He's way too old to have been my classmate, she thought to herself.*

*Still, after he examined her teeth, she asked, "Did you happen to attend Morgan Park High School?"*

"Yes! I'm a Mustang," he gleamed with pride.

"When did you graduate?" she asked.

"1972" he said, "Why do you ask?",

"You were in my class!" she exclaimed.

"Really?" he said, looking at her closely. "What did you teach?"

We wear self-centered glasses that don't see ourselves or others properly. God is constantly giving us corrective lenses.

**James 1:23–24 (NIV)** Anyone who **listens to the word** but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in **a mirror** <sup>24</sup> and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

**Isaiah 28:17 (NIV)** I will make justice **the measuring line** and righteousness **the plumb line**; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place.

Do you make wrong comparisons? Do you compare yourself to others? Where do you do this most? On Social Media feeds? Or comparing yourself with the bad guys in the news? Do you think, *At least I'm not like them?*

The wrong comparison is self-deceiving.

Compare yourself instead with God's Word, the mirror, the measuring line, God's the plumbline. I know this and still often make wrong comparisons.

## II. I forget to have an **OUTWARD MINDSET**

**Philippians 2:3–4 (NIV)** Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility **value others above yourselves**, <sup>4</sup> not **looking** to your own interests but each of you **to the interests of the others**.

This is the way of Jesus. This was his mindset. I want to be like him.

## III. I **SPEAK** too **QUICKLY**

**James 1:19 (NIV)** My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be **quick to listen, slow to speak** and slow to become angry,

In most social settings I don't know what to say. I'm not very chatty. I'm horrible at it, or that is the inadequacy I feel.

But those inadequacies disappear in some other settings. When I enter a theological discussion, or a ministry discussion, my thoughts run on familiar turf. Watch out. If you look interested, you can't shut me up.

It was after one of those ministry shop talk settings where I talked too much that I was pierced though by this passage.

**Romans 12:16 (CSB)** *Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud; instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation.*

I know better. I know that what I know is smaller than what I don't know.

Why do I let the smallest bit of knowledge puff me up and fill me full of myself?! I'm that fool.

**PRACTICE:** Through this series read the chapter of proverbs that corresponds to the date of the month. For example: On March **8**, read Proverbs **8**. Make a note or two on which wise saying you found most helpful.

#### **IV. But when I admit "I'm THAT fool", GOOD NEWS comes.**

**Luke 18:9–14 (NIV)** *To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: <sup>10</sup> "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' <sup>13</sup> "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' <sup>14</sup> "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."*

Which one was reconciled to God that day? The fool who knew he was the fool. Not the fool who thought he was wise!

God makes it possible to reconcile a fool like you and me.

**1 Corinthians 1:18 (NIV)** *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

If you think you are wise, you will think the way of the cross is foolishness!  
But if you know you are that fool, you will be wise if you come to the cross!

I'm That Fool  
(Week 1)  
I'm Wise In My Own Eyes

### SMALL TALK

1. Can you think of a time when you slipped into being “wise in your own eyes”? What was the context?

### VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Proverbs 3:7 & 26:12; Luke 18:9–14.** In Jesus’ parable, which person was the fool? Why? Do you think the Pharisee was familiar with the many Proverbs about not being “wise in your own eyes”? If so, how can it happen that he slipped into that? What is his basic problem?
3. **READ Matthew 5:20.** How shocked do you think Jesus’ audience was by this statement? Why or why not?
4. **READ 2 Corinthians 10:12; James 1:23-24; Isaiah 28:17.** What is the common problem described in 2 Corinthians? What causes this? What theme in James and Isaiah serves to remedy such a problem?
5. **READ Philippians 2:3-4.** How can anyone maintain this kind of outward mindset? What follows this statement?

### GETTING PERSONAL

6. When have you been like the tax collector in Jesus’ story? When have you been like the pharisee in Jesus’ story?

7. If the tax collector or the pharisee from Jesus' story came to our group, how would either one of them be received in our group?
8. How confident are you in your relationship with God? On what factors do you base your level of confidence before God?

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