



LESSON 11: “Rejecters: Comparisons that Count” **Date:** _____

KEY VERSE: Proverbs 1:22 – “How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? And the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?”

INTRODUCTION

Tim Lahaye first published his book, *Spirit Controlled Temperament*, in 1966. Lahaye’s best-selling book divides people into four different personality groups: sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic and melancholy. Many Christians have worked through Lahaye’s quasi- psychological classic seeking to find out which group they fit.

Even though New Testament believers are warned that when we “compare ourselves among ourselves we are not wise” (II Cor. 10:12), we still like make comparisons and establish classifications. It’s fashionable to divide people by body-type, management-style, skin-tone (I still don’t know if I’m a summer or a spring!), birth-order and culture. God classifies people into a several different groups.

- In the Old Testament, God divided the world into two ethnic groups—Jew and Gentile (Gal. 3:23).
- In the New Testament, God divides the world into three groups. There are two ethnic groups. The Jews and the Gentiles. The third group blends together the ethnic groups of the Old Testament by faith and is called the church (I Cor. 10:32).

When looking at the spiritual condition of the world, God divides everyone into two groups: believers and unbelievers. Those who are believers in Christ, have life. Those who are not believers in Christ, do not have life (John 3:36).

God’s comparisons and classifications are much more important than the comparisons and classifications offered by the world. As we study the book of Proverbs, we discover that the book is written to encourage

those who are seeking wisdom (Proverb 1:1-6). Sadly, not everyone will receive the wisdom that God reveals. In Proverbs 1:22, God reveals that there are three classifications of revelation rejecters. Some are simple ones. Some are scorers. Some are fools.

Because the Hebrew title of the book of Proverbs means “comparison” it is important that students of the book of Proverbs be diligent to find the comparisons that God has woven into this practical book. The authors of the book of Proverbs compare the rich and the poor, the righteous and the froward, the slothful and the diligent, as well as the proud and the humble. Proverbs 1:22 sets forward the wrong response of three kinds of people to the revelation of the Bible. This is a study that is especially important for parents and Christian educators!

Theme: The wise will avoid the characteristics of the simple, the scorners, and the fool.

Transition: Let’s look carefully at the simple one, the scorners and the fool before we look at the wise.

THE SIMPLE

The “simple one” appears fourteen times in the book of Proverbs. His title indicates his mental attitude not his mental capacity. In some areas of the country, to be called “simple” is to be demeaned as mentally inept. That is not the case in the book of Proverbs. The “simple one” in Proverbs is a person who is pliable. The “simple one” in Proverbs is a follower.

There’s a story told of two men who were in the Empire State Building as fire burned from below. One of the men said, “I have a flashlight and you can climb down the beam!” His friend responded, “I’m not that dumb, you’re going to turn the light off when I’m half-way down!” While such a conversation never took place, we all know those who seem to be overly-impressed by those who are not particularly helpful. Such is the state of the simple one.

The book of Proverbs contains an open invitation to come and find wisdom.

- *Proverbs 1:1-6 – The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words*

of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.

- *Proverbs 2:3-6 – If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.*

The simple one has been given God's invitation. The simple one is offered an opportunity to become wise. Let's look at how the simple one responds to this invitation:

UNDERSTANDING THE SIMPLE

There are three distinct traits exhibited by the simple ones in the book of Proverbs:

1. ***They lack understanding (Prov. 9:1-6).***

Proverbs 9:1-6 says, "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city, whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding."

Notice the last part of this passage. The simple one is instructed to, "Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding." This instruction is given because the simple one is found in the company and the influence of fools and has not yet determined to follow the pathway of understanding.

In 1977, a car filled with teens pulled onto State Route 50 in Clarksburg, West Virginia. The teen-aged driver failed to look left before executing his right-hand turn. He pulled right into

the path of a semi-truck and five teens lost their lives. One of the victims was a fifteen year-old girl who went against her parent's instructions that morning. She was supposed to be on the school bus. Instead, she got into a car filled with her friends and she lost her life. She was a simple one. She placed herself in danger by the company that she kept. She failed to realize that fifteen minutes with the wrong friend can destroy fifteen years of parental instruction. She lacked understanding.

2. ***They are gullible (Prov. 14:15).***

Proverbs 14:15 enlarges our understanding of the simple one. Here we read, "The simple believeth every word." Unfortunately, the simple one is very gullible. They fall prey easily to the tale-bearers web. They believe the lying friend who promises that drugs, promiscuity and alcohol will not harm them. They are gullible.

3. ***They are susceptible to mischief (Prov. 7).***

In Proverbs 7 a powerful and sad picture is painted. A simple one is seen passing through the street and falling victim to the invitation of an immoral woman. Proverbs 7:7 says that the simple one lacked understanding. In Proverbs 7:21 we learn that the immoral woman used her words to catch the simple one. Sadly, Proverbs 7:22-23 tells us that the simple one will die in the trap that he enters. He is susceptible to mischief.

The simple one appears to be morally naïve and weak to temptation. His response to wisdom is to ignore it.

In I Kings 12, we find the story of Rehoboam, son of King Solomon and grandson of King David. As Rehoboam took the throne, he sought counsel of the young and the not-so-young. The young told him that he would be wise to exert his authority. The seasoned counselors told him to be kind and patient. Rehoboam was a simple one. He listened to the wrong voices and the kingdom was divided (I Kings 12:1-16).

HELPING THE SIMPLE

The simple one can be made strong but intervention is necessary. Those who are responding properly to the wisdom offered by God are called upon to minister to his needs. Proverbs calls upon the wise to step in and offer simple ones two very important things:

1. *Simple ones need to be offered hope (Prov. 1:4).*

In Proverbs 1:4, the author of the book of Proverbs demonstrates that he has hope for the simple. He says that what he is writing will “give subtlety to the simple.” The word translated “subtlety” means “wisdom or prudence.” The author of the book of Proverbs shows no impatience with the simple but offers them hope.

2. *Simple ones need to be surrounded by those who are consistent (Prov. 21:11).*

Proverbs 21:11 says, “When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise.” Isn’t it true that the “oldest child” often requires more correction than the 2nd child? Often this is because the second child fears the punishment that they have seen their older sibling receive. Parents who would influence their “simple ones,” need to surround their children with those who will consistently deal with those who scorn.

Transition: Having been introduced to the simple one, let’s look at...

THE SCORNER

The “scorner” is spoken of eighteen times in the book of Proverbs. Scorners seem to mock or ridicule what is right. While the simple one may be so naïve as to not understand wisdom’s invitation and import, the scorner hears the invitation of wisdom and mocks it.

UNDERSTANDING THE SCORNER

Proverbs paints a sad picture of the person that is classified as a scorner. The scorner is moving consistently away from the voice of wisdom. The scorner is moving closer and closer to destruction.

1. *Scorners will not listen (Prov. 13:1)*

Proverbs 13:1 says, “A wise son heareth his father’s instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke.” Sadly, the scorner has been given the benefit of instruction but chooses not to hear it! Unlike the simple one who may have never been given guidance and correction, the scorner has been privy to godly counsel and chooses not to listen.

2. *Scorners do not desire wise counsel (Prov. 15:12).*

Proverbs 15:12 is clear, “A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise.” The scorner is not seeking those who will turn the Bible for answers. The scorner shows no loving appreciation to those who offer correction.

We live in a culture that rejects authority. Individuality is honored and rebellion is tolerated. Parents side with children against teachers, administrators and pastors. As the population of scorners grows, those who offer wisdom for life’s pathways find themselves increasingly lonely.

3. *Scorners actually despise those who teach righteousness (Prov. 9:8).*

Proverbs 9:8 tears the mask off of the scorner as wise counselors are warned, “Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee.” How many youth pastors, youth workers, camp counselors, and preachers have experienced the radical rejection of the scorner?

HELPING THE SCORNER

In a culture of affirmation and approval, the counsel of God’s Word to those who would help scorners seems archaic and severe. Nevertheless, “Let God be true and every man a liar” (Romans 3:4). Here is what the book of Proverbs says is necessary if the scorner is to be helped.

1. *He is to be smitten (Prov. 19:25).*

Proverbs 19:25 says, “Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware.” Smiting a scorner has a two-fold purpose. First, it is beneficial to the scorner. Secondly, it is beneficial to the simple one.

How do twenty-first century parents tend to respond when they hear that their children have been “called down” in class or in youth group? Do they thank the authority figure for their concern? Do they back the teacher or youth pastor? Do they realize that their child may be scorning the revelation of God and in need of admonition?

2. He is to be expelled (Prov. 22:10).

Proverbs 22:10 actually says, “Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.” At this point caution may be advisable. Remember, the scorner must be biblically identified as one who will not listen to wise counsel, does not desire wise counsel and actually comes to hate those who offer wise counsel. The scorner should only be expelled when a biblical identification has been accomplished. When simple ones are treated like scorners and scorners are treated like simple ones, great damage may ensue.

3. He is to be punished creatively (Prov. 19:29).

Proverbs 19:29 says, “Judgments are prepared for scorners.” Creative intervention may create opportunities for instruction. Corporal punishment is not the only correct form of biblical discipline. Here are a few different ways to correct wrongdoing:

- *Verbal Correction* – Jesus practiced this when he said, “Get thee behind me Satan,” to Peter (Matt. 16:23). Peter’s conduct was corrected by a verbal warning.
- *Loss of Privilege* – Moses’ sin cost him entrance into the promised land (Numbers 20:11-12).
- *Repayment* – God required the thief to restore double (Ex. 22:4).
- *Public Example* – When an elder sins, he is to be “rebuked before all” (I Tim. 5:20).
- *Ostracism* – In II Thessalonians 3:14 we learn that it is wise to remove fellowship from the disobedient that they might “be ashamed.” A time-out or suspension may be a good course of action of a scorner.

Transition: The steps of rejection of the revelation of God lead from simplicity to scorning to becoming a proverbial “fool.” Let’s look at the one the author of the book of Proverbs calls the fool.

THE FOOL

The fool is one of the most frequently focused upon characters in the book of Proverbs. The fool is spoken of over seventy times. In essence, the fool is a person dedicated to evil. The fool has an unabashed hatred of wisdom. He willfully and rebelliously refuses to make right choices.

UNDERSTANDING THE FOOL

The book of Proverbs offers at least three characteristics of the one called the fool.

1. The fool sins with confidence (Prov. 14:16).

In Proverbs 14:16 we read, “A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.” For those who love the law of God and live in the power of the Spirit of God, such a description is abhorrent. Psalm 2 describes the path of the fool as a path of total rejection of God’s authority.

2. The fool is beyond correction (Prov. 17:10).

The hardness of the fool’s heart toward wisdom makes discipline irrelevant. In Proverbs 17:10 we discover, “A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.”

As the American prison system wrestles with the reason for recidivism, God concludes – they are fools. They have moved away from the revelation of God into the realm of utter rejection of moral good.

3. The fool has no heart for wisdom (Prov. 17:16).

Proverbs 17:16 reveals that the fool is not interested in the way of wisdom when it says, “Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?” Unfortunately, many parents will spend great amounts of

money to place a wayward child in a correctional facility, a Christian school or any number of intervention programs only to find frustration. Why? Because the fool has no heart for wisdom.

4. ***The fool will lie (Prov. 10:18).***

Proverbs 10:18 says, “He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool.” The fool will lie in order to hide true feelings about others and then will share true feelings about others with those who are not part of the solution – only privy to the allegation. Fools lie because they hate the truth.

HELPING THE FOOL

The author of the book of Proverbs does not offer what would appear to be positive correction for this character. Two recommendations are made.

1. ***The fool is to be excluded from fellowship (Prov. 13:20).***

Proverbs 13:20 warns, “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.” The righteous cannot continue to walk with fools and remain righteous. I Cor. 15:33 agrees saying, “Evil communications corrupt good manners.”

Our soft hearts tend to dismiss this as what we believe to be an extreme admonition. We forget that sin spreads from soul to soul and the influence of evil is a powerful thing.

2. ***The fool is beyond counsel (Prov. 23:9).***

Proverbs 23:9 says, “Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.”

Question: Can anyone remember how the Savior affirmed this same counsel?

Hint: The answer has something to do with a pig.

Answer: Matt. 7:6 – “Neither cast ye your pearls before the swine.”

Every believer has an obligation to share the Bible with carefulness. When the heart of a fool is too stubborn to hear the Word and there is no apparent desire to be corrected, the Word of God will bounce off of the fool like water off of a duck’s back.

Transition: God classifies those who are not actively receiving His wisdom as simple ones, scorners and fools. God’s desire is that each of us be like...

THE WISE

The ultimate goal of the book of Proverbs is to produce wise sons (see chapter one). In an attempt to cooperate with this goal, many believers read a chapter of the book of Proverbs each day. Since there are thirty-one chapters, it is easy to remember which chapter to read! The wise son is portrayed in the book of Proverbs as a lover of wisdom. Three characteristics mark his character.

1. ***He listens to wise counsel (Prov. 1:5).***

Proverbs 1:5 says, “A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.” The wise will seek out the counsel of those who know the paths of righteousness.

Do you have counselors, mentors, and accountability partners that bring God’s Word to you in a practical way? Why not? The wise will listen to counsel.

2. ***He understands the fear the Lord (Prov. 2:1-5).***

Proverbs 2:1-5 affirms, “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.”

The “Fear of the Lord” speaks of reverential awe. It describes the humble response of the one who recognizes the greatness

of God and the fact that an account will be given to him one day. Just as a child will live carefully so as not to disappoint a parent much-revered, even so the wise will live carefully in reverential awe and appreciation of the great and generous God our Creator.

3. *He owns true riches (Prov. 8:11).*

“Wisdom is better than rubies” (Prov. 8:11). The wisdom to live well is a greater treasure than the riches that are coveted by fools. The God who made us has given us His revelation to navigate the pathway in a way that pleases Him.

CONCLUSION

God’s comparisons and classifications are much more important than the comparisons and classifications offered by the world. Sadly, not everyone will receive the wisdom that God reveals. In Proverbs 1:22, we have met three kinds of revelation rejecters: simple ones, scorners, and fools.

- Simple ones are to be offered consistent examples and hope.
- Scorners are to be smitten, expelled and creatively directed.
- Fools are to be excluded from fellowship and Godly counsel.

May God help us to see our ministry produce many wise sons.