

Are You Stupid?

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Are you stupid? I understand that may be a startling question to ask in a bulletin article, but I'm not trying to call you a derogatory name. It's actually a question of utmost importance. Someone who is stupid is someone who is devoid of knowledge, lacks common sense, or is mentally dull. I know what every one of you are thinking: "How dare Marshall even imply that I might be stupid! Of course I'm not stupid!"

Whether or not you are stupid is for you to decide, not me. But what standard am I referring to by which each of us need to determine whether or not we're stupid? Listen to the words of Solomon: "*Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid*" (Proverbs 12:1).

Not only does Solomon call people who refuse to listen to instruction and to be corrected stupid, he also calls them fools. "*A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart*" (Prov. 18:2).

I don't know about you, but there has been more than once in my life that, according to these verses, I was quite stupid and foolish. At those times, I refused to listen to the advice and counsel of those wiser than I, more experienced than I, and those who could see things more objectively than I. I just knew that my opinion was the correct one, and I didn't hesitate in letting others know it.

While there are situations in life that not listening to correction will be detrimental, most of the time we can recover from such foolishness. It may be years later. And it may have cost us some happiness, some money, or some friend. But sometimes the consequences can be much more severe, and we never really recover from being stupid and foolish. We carry around the results for the rest of our lives.

But where this really matters most is when what needs correcting is our spiritual life. How we respond to instruction and criticism will determine many things in this earthly life, but it will more importantly determine our eternal destiny. At the end of the introduction to the book of Proverbs, and in what is considered to be the theme verse of the book, Solomon says, "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction*" (Prov. 1:7).

Let's admit it. Nobody likes to be told they're wrong. It hurts. We take it personally. Feelings of insecurity may rise within us. Anger may also present itself. At that point, we find ourselves at a crucial crossroads. It is at this moment that wisdom needs to be victorious in the battle for our emotions and desires. We may feel that people are going to look down on us if we're wrong and admit it, as if it's some battle to see who's superior. But in actuality, as Solomon points out several times, we're wise when we do so. Could it actually be that we're wrong? Gasp! Yes, it can be. And we're going to be wrong on many things throughout the course of our life. *Who* is right is not as important as *what* is right.

When it comes to spiritual matters, we best be willing to listen to the instruction of God and correct the things that are amiss. An honest person who is mistaken, when shown the truth, either quits being mistaken or quits being honest. There really is no other option. We have the choice of being stupid, foolish, and dishonest, or we can be wise and actually long for and desire instruction, knowing that inherent in that desire is the need for correction.

When we make it our aim to bring our will and purpose and mission into subjection to God and his will, then all we'll ever want is to be right. Let me be clear on this idea of being right, however. This isn't a desire to be right just for the sake of being right, just so we can brag to others about being right and pat ourselves on the back. No, we want to be right because we want to be like God! We want to be right because we want to please God! We want to be right because we love God and therefore wish to do his commandments (John 14:15)!

May it ever be our aim to seek out God's instruction. May we long to be disciplined by God. May we always invite God's word to penetrate our hearts, seek out the impurities, and convict us to the point that we remove that which is not in harmony with the word of God or in character with the example left us by Jesus.

Don't be stupid. Don't be a fool. Be wise and accept the instruction of God. Heed counsel and wisdom and correction, regardless of the source.

"The wise in heart will receive commands, but a prating fool will fall" (Prov. 10:8).