

INTRODUCTION:

1. “A tennis professional was beginning his first lesson with a brand-new student. After watching the novice take several awkward swings at the ball, the coach began offering suggestions for improving his stroke. But each time the pro made a suggestion, the student—an older man—immediately began offering his own critiques as well as numerous excuses and justifications for his play. After several such interruptions, the teacher finally stopped offering pointers and began nodding his head in agreement with everything the man said. When the hour was over, a woman who had been watching this strange lesson approached the tennis pro. ‘Why in the world didn’t you straighten out that arrogant man?’ she asked. The pro smiled knowingly and replied, ‘I learned a long time ago that it’s a waste of time to try to sell answers to someone who only wants to buy echoes.’” **Do you identify? With whom?**
2. I recently came across Proverbs 18:2 and it really jumped out of the page at me. NASB, “A fool does not delight in understanding, but only in revealing his own mind.” ESV, “A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.”
3. It’s a strong indictment. “A fool ...” Proverbs 18:13; James 1:19-20.
4. It’s a real problem. Many people don’t delight in understanding.

DISCUSSION:

1. Why don’t we delight in understanding?

- A. We don’t want to understand. Talking preacher illustration; my interview technique illustration.
- B. We think we already understand everything we need to understand.
- C. We want to win more than we want to be right. Understanding could threaten our agenda so we don’t want to understand.
- D. It takes a great deal of effort to really understand.

2. Why is it foolish?

- A. We jump to false conclusions. We needlessly make other people and ourselves miserable. Proverbs 24:3-4; 1 Peter 3:7.
- B. We don’t grow and develop. Proverbs 15:32.
- C. We make people less inclined to hear what we have to say. Proverbs 23:9.

3. Are we fools?

- A. Some people are fools in this regard more than others. However, we are all fools in this regard from time to time. I strongly suspect that we all have hot buttons that, when pushed by others, cause our ears to shut down and our mouths to start moving.
- B. Some tests.
 - 1) When we are talking to other people – are we listening to what they’re saying or are we thinking about what we are going to say next? Listening is about far more than hearing words.
 - 2) Do we cut people off in the middle of a sentence?
 - 3) Do we loudly argue or calmly discuss?
 - 4) Do we have a condescending tone? Proverbs 13:1.
 - 5) Do we get all angry before we get all the facts?

4. What do we do? Among other things, we must:

- A. Appreciate the importance and place of understanding.
- B. Admit we have a problem, be sorrowful, and repent. Proverbs 7:4.
- C. Pray. Psalm 119:34.
- D. Remain calm and respectful. Proverbs 14:29.
- E. Ask questions.
- F. Not interrupt.
- G. Verify that we truly understand. “So in other words, are you saying ...” George Bernard Shaw, “The greatest problem with communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished.”
- H. Think long and hard before we speak. We need to understand more than just the facts. We also need to understand what to do with them and the best possible way to do it. Proverbs 15:2.
- I. Practice, practice, practice.