



The Proverbial Fool: A Biblical Perspective on the Disordered Personality

Michael Lee Patterson Ph.D.

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The Proverbial Fool: A Biblical Perspective on the Disordered Personality Michael Lee Patterson Ph.D. Serious problem behavior can be attributed to what the psychological literature calls a disordered personality and what the Wisdom Literature of the Holy Bible calls foolishness. A review of the literature found extensive writing on biblical foolishness in the theological literature and extensive writing on personality disorders in the psychological literature, but no works were found studying the correlation between the two. The goal of this research is to add to the body of knowledge regarding personality disorders by developing an improved understanding of the disordering and healing of personality through the use of biblical information and perspective. The research premise is that the constructs of the fool and foolishness in the biblical Wisdom Literature provide a meaningful understanding of the disordering and healing of the personality and that these constructs correlate positively to the DSM-V Cluster B personality disorders. This study compares and contrasts the numerous Hebrew words that comprise the biblical constructs of the fool and foolishness, exploring the width and depth of the biblical constructs. This study examines the psychological theory behind the personality disorders and identifies a variety of interventions currently practiced in the counseling field for Cluster B personality disorders. This study compares and contrasts the biblical constructs of the fool and foolishness with modern personality theory and evaluates psychology's understanding of personality disorders in light of Biblical teaching. The constructs of the fool and foolishness in the biblical Wisdom Literature provide a meaningful understanding of the disordering and healing of the personality and these constructs correlate positively to the DSM-V Cluster B personality disorders. While it is true that an exact correlation would not be possible because of advances in medicine and the semantic differences between ancient and modern language, it should be noted that many aspects of the fundamental understanding of personality dysfunction in the constructs of the fool and foolishness in the Wisdom Literature and the modern psychological perspective have been found to be similar. Both identify causality as a developmental deficit, even if they describe the deficit using different terminology (lack of wisdom versus developmental pathogenesis, etc.). Both recognize that the mental and behavioral dysfunction falls on a continuum, ranging from occasional misjudgments to a pathological intentionality. Both identify thresholds by which to judge the level of dysfunction. Both recognize that the individuals are treatment resistant and that the client's teachability is a predictor of therapeutic efficacy.

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