

**Fools show their annoyance at once,
but the prudent overlook an insult (Proverbs 12:16)**

A Proverbial Story

By Ted Hildebrandt and Chatgpt

It was Grandfather's 80th birthday, and the whole Whitaker family gathered under one roof — a rare event, given how scattered they all were. The dining room buzzed with chatter, laughter, and the clink of silverware against plates piled high with roast beef, mashed potatoes, and fresh rolls.

At the head of the table sat Grandpa, beaming proudly at the generations before him. To his right was his eldest son, Zachary, a man who often carried his pride like a badge of honor. Next to Zachary sat his younger brother, Elliott — the peacemaker of the family, whose calmness had long been mistaken for weakness.

As the meal progressed, stories from the past surfaced, as they always did. Old nicknames, foolish teenage mistakes, and adventures surfaced, and childhood rivalries were all dragged out into the open. It was during one of these retellings that Zachary, perhaps emboldened by his third glass of wine, let slip a jab at Elliott.

"Well, we all know Elliott was never the brightest," Zachary chuckled, stabbing a potato with his fork. "Couldn't even tie his shoes until he was what, eight?"

The table fell silent. Some cousins exchanged awkward glances. Aunt Karen coughed into her napkin. Zachary leaned back, smirking as if he'd just told the cleverest joke.

Elliott felt the heat rise to his face. His hand twitched slightly under the tablecloth. For a brief moment, he considered lashing out — reminding Zachary of all his own youthful foibles, many far more embarrassing than slow shoelace skills. He could have listed them by date and in detail.

But then Elliott caught Grandpa's eye — a steady, knowing look — and remembered something Granddad used to say: "Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult."

Elliott smiled, slowly and genuinely. He lifted his glass and said, "Well, maybe I was slow with tying shoes, but it gave me plenty of time to watch and learn — especially from Zachary's upside-down and backward efforts to teach me."

The room burst into laughter, light and easy. Even Zachary barked out a surprised chuckle. The tension broke, swept away like dust off an old rug.

Later that night, as the dishes were cleared and dessert was served, Grandpa pulled Elliott aside.

"You could have put him in his place," Grandpa said, his voice low and proud.

Elliott shrugged. "Wasn't worth it. It's your night, not a battlefield."

Grandpa nodded, his smile deepening the wrinkles around his eyes. "Takes more strength to hold your peace than to win an argument."

Elliott looked out at his family — his nieces dancing around the living room, Zachary arguing good-naturedly over the best kind of pie, and Grandma laughing so hard he had to wipe her eyes.

He realized that dignity wasn't in defending yourself and correcting others, but in how firmly you protected what mattered most: peace, family, and a night filled with laughter.

And he was glad he hadn't wasted any of it being a fool, as the old proverb had instructed: "Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult."