

A Fool Should Not Be Answered According to His Folly

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A Fool Should Not Be Answered According to His Folly (Prov. 26:4).

Not all fools are equal. Some may be in error on a certain subject but can be corrected if verifiable information is presented to them, while other fools will reject the truth about a particular subject no matter how convincing the evidence may be.

As far as God is concerned, every human being is foolish when it comes to correctly understanding His word. Using symbolic language to describe this situation, God compares mankind's foolishness to being in darkness because they cannot see (understand) His truth unless He turns their foolishness (darkness) into light (symbol representing God's truth; cf. Ps. 119:105; Prov. 6:23), through His intervention in their lives (cf. Jn. 6:44, 65; Rom. 2:4b),

But he who hates his brother is in darkness (foolish and deceived) and walks (operates; functions) in darkness, and does not know where he is going (even though he is convinced otherwise), because the darkness has blinded his eyes (1Jn. 2:11; cf. Jn. 3:19; 8:12; 12:35, 46; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted).

Unless Almighty God is in the process of calling someone to understand His truth, no one can convince someone else to trust and obey what

God says. By his own words, Jesus Christ stated that he could not do this either.

No one can come to me (Jesus Christ) unless the Father (Almighty God) who sent me (Christ) draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day (i.e. – at a future resurrection of the dead) (John 6:44; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

To reinforce this point and make sure there is no misunderstanding. Christ repeated this truth again.



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And he (Christ) said, "Therefore I have said (previously) to you that no one can come to me unless it has been granted to him by my Father (John 6:65; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Consequently, if Almighty God is not calling someone to understand His truth, they will remain foolish and resist anyone's attempt to teach them that obedience to God's commands is central to inheriting everlasting life (cf. Mt. 19:16-17).

Because the carnal mind is enmity (hostile) against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be (Rom. 8:7; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

So, there is "none so blind (or foolish) as he who will not see", and anyone trying to convince a "fool" in this condition is wasting their time and energy. Hence the following scripture:

Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him (Prov. 26:4).

The apostle Paul made a similar statement in response to endless disputes between some church members. Presumably, these individuals had entrenched ideas or beliefs, and were trying to convince others to change their mind.

As I (Paul) urged you (Timothy) when I went into Macedonia – remain in Ephesus that you may charge (command) some that they teach no other doctrine, ⁴ nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith (1Tim. 1:3-4; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).



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In other words, if you try to force your belief or opinion upon someone who is unwilling to accept it, you are foolish. What's worse is doing so if you know better, because you become just like those who use these tactics to convince others against their will.

If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine (teaching) which is according to godliness, ⁴ he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, ⁵ useless wranglings (constant friction) of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself (1Tim. 6:3-5; Ed. notes in parentheses).

But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes knowing that they generate strife. ²⁴And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, ²⁵in humility correcting those

who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, ²⁶and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will (2Tim. 2:23-26).

But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. ¹⁰Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned (Titus 3:9-11).

In any relationship, when foolish behavior or reasoning becomes evident and the person conducting themselves in this manner will not change, it is useless to argue or debate any further, no matter how good one's intentions may be. On the other hand, if a person is in error and they are willing to listen, it is not wrong to present the facts in a manner that may help them change their mind. This is the meaning behind the next scripture,

Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise (in this world's sense of wisdom; see study: Wisdom a Source of Vexation, Grief and Sorrow) in his own eyes (Prov. 26:5; Ed. note in parenthesis).

So, there is no contradiction between the two verses in the 26th chapter of Proverbs. Instead, they are describing two different types of people. One group will not change their mind no matter how conclusive the proof against their position may be, while the other group may change their point of view if they can see their error. When communicating with the former group, it is futile arguing with them. Therefore, God's word teaches discernment on the part of anyone who encounters these two different personality types.

Finally, it is useless to convince anyone that they need to obey God's law and commandments, unless Almighty God is in the process of calling them, because only He can change someone's foolish behavior and lead them out of darkness.

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