

## Proverbs 26, Dec 30, 2024 -Men's Monday Morning Bible Study

### **Overview:**

Only three commands:

V4 & 5; v25

3 Sections:

1. 1-12, The Fool
2. 13-16, The Sluggard
3. 17-28, Mouth, lips, tongue

### **Commentary:**

#### The Fool (1-12)

“Fool” is used eleven times in twelve verses.

V1 Fools should not receive glory or attention. Instead they should be shamed and ignored.

V2 seems odd given the context.

V3 Fools should be punished like dumb animals since they behave like them. The phrase, “making an ass out of oneself” refers to foolish behavior and captures the same sentiment. The proverb takes it a step further and prescribes harsh correction as the way to treat them.

V4 & 5 seem like contradictions but indeed are not. See Bahnsen on the seemingly contradictory commands of v4-5. They are two sides to thinking about interactions with fools. On the one hand, fools are to be ignored and avoided.

Essentially v4 is an extension of what Jesus says “Do not cast your pearls before swine...” Matt 7:6. Don't waste your time with people who won't appreciate what you have to say. The proverb continues... lest you be like him (the fool). In other words, talking to

fools is foolish. There is a time to cut bait and move on. This is a judgement call and indeed requires such skill as to ascertain the state of a person's character.

On the other hand, they are to be addressed and put in their place. They are to be smacked around lest they puff themselves up and their kind is celebrated and proliferated.

I have given this some thought as to when one is to ignore and avoid fools and when to address them. What criterion are we to apply to discern when to do which action? I think that the size of the audience determines the action required by wise men. The size of the crowd is a factor in determining which path to take. Private and public engagement are also to be considered. If a fool says something to me or about me privately, it can easily be ignored and dismissed. Don't get sucked into the vortex of debating a fool. However, if there are public accusations or public claims that the fool is making, he should be addressed and shown to be a fool by his inferior reasoning. This is what public debate looks like. It typically happens in politics and academic settings. We see conservative voices like Ben Shapiro, Charlie Kirk, and Jordan Peterson doing this. University settings are a good place to contain such corrections but is not strictly limited to those. There may be other occasions to address foolishness publicly.

V6 is about the employment of fools. It is self-contradictory and self-harming. One would never "cut off his own feet" or "drink violence". Why would one employ (send) a fool?

V7 The fool is not a philosopher even though he pretends to be one. It is a pointless exercise to have fools trying to speak wisdom.

V8 A stone is in a sling for the purpose of slinging it. To bind it in there is antithetical to the design and purpose of the sling. Likewise, it is antithetical to draw positive attention to fools. Again, they are to be ignored and their words discarded.

V9 Thorns should deter action but thorns in the hands of drunkards do not deter. Likewise, wisdom is wasted on fools.

V10 Again we see the pain and hardship of hiring fools. Having fools in your employ causes damage to everyone around including your other employees, the public, your customers, and ultimately, you as the employer. He is like an archer that indiscriminately shoots arrows at everyone. The fool is dangerous to everyone and should be contained not given freedom.

V11 Fools love their foolishness like dogs love their own vomit. It is a gross and detestable picture of the fool's behavior. He is in love with his stupidity and even thinks himself wise. He is a know it all that refuses to be taught and avoids wisdom preferring to wallow in the mire of his own mind. He spurns outside counsel.

V12 makes the point that not understanding one's own need for growth and learning is a death knell. There is no hope for someone not willing to listen. We have seen multiple other verses dealing with this concept.

Part 2 of the verse underlines the severity of the situation. Fools have more hope than the unteachable. Those unwilling to learn and accept the position of pupil are doomed. They are in the prison of their own minds and cannot escape.

### The Sluggard (13-16)

V13 The lazy always has an excuse. He is never short for a reason why he can't take responsibility and go to work.

V14 The lazy loves sleep.

V15 The lazy is nonsensical. He won't even put forth enough effort to eat.

V16 the lazy is also a fool who has a faulty self-perception. He thinks himself wise. He is a fool.

### Mouth, lips, tongue (17-28)

V17 creating and fueling arguments and discord is like grabbing a dog by its ears. The one who does this will be bitten. There are consequences to what we say.

V18-19 go together. The person who is deceiving and calls it a joke causes much harm. "Misleading jests" are prohibited.<sup>1</sup> One does not get to say "I meant no harm" or "I was just kidding."

V20-21 have to do with people who fuel strife and contention. Gossips and talkers are to be done away with like the fool.

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<sup>1</sup> Kidner, Derek -Proverbs, p164

V22 is a repetition of 18:8. Gossip corrupts to the innermost parts. Avoid it.

V23-26 go together and illustrate a progression of thought. V25 contains the command of prohibition. Do not believe the lies of deceivers. Of course, no one in their right mind would willingly believe lies. The key to avoiding lies is to be able to identify liars. V25b says he has seven abominations in his heart. See Prov. 6:16-19 for reference. We read this passage on the regular as a reminder of what God hates during our time of confession on Sunday mornings.

The point is to avoid people with lifestyles like this. They conceal their deeds but do not be fooled. You know how people are. Don't get sucked in.

V27 outlines God's judgement on those who contrive evil plans. The evil he plans will come back on him. This is not karma. This is divine judgement and irony.

V28 is another reminder to avoid liars and flatterers. Flattery is a killer. It creates ruin and destruction. Do not listen to it or suffer a flatterer. Put distance between you and them. If they are men, they are conniving game players. If they are women, they are probably adulteresses.

### Conclusion:

Don't be a fool. Instead, be wise. Don't be lazy. Be hard working. Control your tongue.

### Closing Prayer:

Father, thank You for Your word and the wisdom it provides. Help us to understand and obey it. Make us men of wisdom full of grace and truth. Give us discernment and sound judgement. Let us work hard for the glory of God and control our tongues. Let us be men who walk with you in a manner worthy of the gospel of Jesus, by the power of the Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.