

## To Answer A Fool According To His Folly Or Not???

### I. Introduction:

A. In this lesson, when we consider the word “fool”, we are talking about a person who is: “properly fat, that is, (figuratively) stupid or silly: - fool (-ish)” (Strong’s # 3684). Another definition: “fool, stupid fellow, dullard, simpleton, arrogant one” (BDB).

1. A person who considers it a sport to do mischief (**Proverbs 10:23**).
2. A person who proclaims foolishness (**Proverbs 12:23**) openly (**Proverbs 13:16**).
3. A person who considers it an abomination to depart from evil (**Proverbs 13:19**).
4. A person to be avoided (**Proverbs 14:7**) for good reason (**Proverbs 13:20**).
5. A person who is foolish, but confident (**Proverbs 14:16**).

B. When we talk about folly in this lesson that means: “silliness: - folly, foolishly (-ness)” (Strong’s # 200).

1. Think about a fool and his folly (**Proverbs 14:8** and **Proverbs 17:12**).
2. This word is also translated “foolishness” (**Proverbs 15:2** and **Proverbs 19:3**).

### II. Body: The Unwinnable Dilemma From An Unclear Text (**Proverbs 26:4-5**).

A. We have the formation of a dilemma when we consider responding to a fool. There is good reason not to (**Proverbs 1:7** and **Proverbs 23:9**).

1. The fool doesn’t want to understand (**Proverbs 18:2**).
2. Answering a fool will likely have some consequences (**Proverbs 29:9**, **Ecclesiastes 10:12-13**, and **Matthew 7:6**).

B. Using the fool’s foolishness to respond to the fool (**Proverbs 16:22**, **Luke 7:24-35**, **II Corinthians 11:12-33**, and **Galatians 3:1-6**).

1. I use this line of teaching sometimes. For example, there are people that foolishly state that anything the individual Christian can do; the church can do too. I answer this foolishness with a foolish answer...
  - a. “Two Christians are authorized to have sex if they are Scripturally married (**I Corinthians 7:1-5** and **Hebrews 13:4**).”
  - b. “So, according to your logic, the church is authorized to have collective sex.”
2. There are guidelines to help us (**II Timothy 2:14-26**).
3. We have to be careful. One thing that identifies a fool is the multitude of words (**Ecclesiastes 5:3**; **10:13-14**).
  - a. What if we talk too much in responding to the fool (**Proverbs 10:19**)?
  - b. How far do you go (**Psalms 39:1** and **Titus 3:9-11**)?

- c. Could a fool be trapping you (**Mark 12:13**)?
  - d. Could the fool want you to talk more (**Luke 11:53-54**)?
- C. Answering a fool according to his foolishness to prevent he or she from being wise in their own sight. Humbling them in essence (**I Corinthians 1:18-29**).
- 1. God is not pleased by someone being wise in their own conceit [eye; sight] (**Proverbs 3:7, Isaiah 5:21, and Romans 12:16**).
  - 2. If you combine a fool and being right in one's own eyes (**Proverbs 12:15**), that is a disastrous combination (**Proverbs 26:12**).
- D. Taking a further look at this "rock and a hard place" set of instructions by thinking spiritually (cf. **I Corinthians 2:14**).
- 1. In some cases, you can leave something alone that is not worthy of response (**Romans 16:17-18 and I Timothy 6:3-5**).
  - 2. We have to consider what often comes with trying to engage with a fool (**Proverbs 18:6; 20:3**).
    - a. We can leave it alone and avoid contention (**Proverbs 17:14**).
    - b. Yet, sometimes a spiritually minded person can respond to the fool with an approach the fool can understand (**Matthew 21:23-27**).
  - 3. What about the possibility that the unanswered words of the fool will influence others (**Galatians 5:7-9**)?
    - a. Some things cannot be left alone, even when foolish (**Galatians 2:1-5**).
    - b. Yet, with mature discernment, sometimes we still have to leave such foolishness alone (**Matthew 15:1-14**).
    - c. That doesn't mean we don't expose what the fool is saying or doing (**II Timothy 3:1-9**).
  - 4. We should not assume all fools are complete lost causes (**Titus 3:3**).
    - a. Some of us have been pretty foolish in our sinful pasts. When we remember from whence we came, shouldn't that spark an indebtedness towards those that need to see the light as we did (**Romans 1:13-17**)?
    - b. Wherein engaging is not a compromise of the truth, remember to be merciful (**James 2:12-13**).

III. Conclusion: Answering a fool according to his or her folly is a long-shot, at best (**Proverbs 26:11; 27:22**). Just know there is a time for such and choose wisely when to engage.