

To Answer or Not to Answer (Go To Meeting)

Lindsay Stephens—June 17, 2023

We live in a world that is very negative as far as God is concerned. We live in a godless society, which is increasingly more that way. There are skeptics that believe that the Bible contradicts itself and written by men who have philosophies and no idea of what is right and what is wrong. One of the Scriptures that they often present is in:

Proverbs 26:4: “**Do not answer a fool** according to his folly, lest you also be like him. **Answer a fool according to his folly**, so that he may not be wise in his own conceit.” (vs 4-5).

The skeptics will say isn't that quite blatant that you first you don't answer a fool and then in the next verse you do. Which one is it?

I want to emphasize here the importance of tact and discretion, because those verses are very important and relevant to the right circumstances. Whether we like it or not, we've been called into God's Church as firstfruits, and we have to interact with people in the world during our lifetime. We have to answer them in the right way as far as our calling is concerned according to God's purpose.

I want to emphasize in this message *the importance of tact and discretion!* We interact with all kinds of people and circumstances, all different backgrounds, all cultures. The potential for all of these people is that they are going to be eventually called and become spirit beings. It's all a matter of God's time.

Matthew 22:39: “And *the second one is* like it: “**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**”

This part of the way that we should be as being called in God's Church. So, we can answer questions. People ask us questions about the Bible, about God or about what we believe. We can answer either the right way or the wrong way.

What I want to do is just present an example of myself when I answered a person the wrong way. This was when I was new in the Church and just started getting established with knowing a few friends. I went out with a couple of friends to his ex-brother-in-law's place. I think I wanted to buy something their and he told me his ex-brother-in-law used to make these things. So, I went there.

Lo and behold, there were about 30-40 people there and they were having a barbeque. We weren't expected to be there, but he invited us in anyway and he offered us meat, salad and drinks.

It was very hospitable of him to do that. We had a discussion and talking about things, and it was very lighthearted to start off with. But as time went on it gradually got more and more involved. Somehow the Church came into it and my friend in the Church at that time, and his ex-brother-in-law knew he was in the Church, so he knew a bit about it.

Anyway, we got talking about the Church and God's ways, and talking about the Bible and God's Plan. It got more and more involved as time went on. Suddenly, it became heavy, and I wasn't prepared for what was coming. I didn't know what this person was like.

Out of the blue came the bombshell! The question came: What do you do? *I was sort stuck at the time, and it sort of hit me by surprise in the way he asked the question!* He allowed time and then he asked the question again:

- What do you do to promote goodness on the earth?
- When did you last serve 'meals on wheels'?
- How many drunks have you picked up off the street?
- How many charities have you organized?
- What have you done?

It couldn't really answer him because I just wasn't prepared in the way he asked the questions. Then he eventually said:

Look, you're welcome to come here at anytime, but if you promote this Church of yours and don't do anything physically to follow it up, I'm not interested.

I didn't handle it very well because I went down to his level. I asked him, 'What have you done?' *He said, 'I've done my bit!'* without any information about what he has actually done. But the thing was, I wanted to get out of there fast, and it was made all the more embarrassing by the fact that he was the host and he invited us to have a meal and drinks there.

So, it was very embarrassing and made all the more embarrassing that we were his guests in that scenario. It reminds me of:

Matthew 7:6: “Do not give that which is Holy to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before the swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn around and tear you in pieces.”

That is exactly what Satan the devil wants. To be torn in pieces when we can't give a proper answer back. We don't give them what's Holy to the dogs when they're not ready to receive it. I can tell you that this person certainly wasn't ready to receive it.

A lot of this message is going to be based on the book of Proverbs.

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

This sort of person, it's not going to do him any good when he's not ready to receive the Word of God or God's Truth. It's not going to do him any good at all. This self-confident fool thinks too highly of himself and his opinions to learn anything from us. He won't take advice. There are several verses in Proverbs that I would like to go into.

Verse 1: "As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honor *is* not becoming for a fool."

It confirms this person in his conceit. They take the credit for it. It reminds me of Parliament and politics today. The people in politics who are conceited and they take the credit for anything that happens in their favor.

Verse 7: "As the legs of the lame hang limp, so *is* a parable in the mouth of fools." *It's just no use at all!*

Verse 8: "As he who ties a stone in a sling, so *is* he who gives honor to a fool." *It's useless in these developments!*

Verse 12: "Do you see a man wise in his own conceit? *There is* more hope for a fool than for him." *Self-opinionated person!*

There are many examples of fools in this life in the world, people who have not been called.

Verse 10: "**The great God who formed all things both rewards the fool and rewards transgressors.**"

Every human being on earth is responsible for their actions! It's all going to pan out and finish one way or the other. If they're not called now, they will be called later.

Just as a matter of interest, I looked up the word *fool* to see how many times it is mentioned in Scripture. In the King James it's mention 66 times, and 36 times alone is it in the book of Proverbs. Looking further into it, I also found that in the Hebrew there are five variations of the word *fool*! So, there are **five different types of fools!** Listing them in order of seriousness:

1. **the simple fool**—'pethiy'

That type of fool is open to any passing thought, and they open up to any stranger. They have lack of discernment and have an oversimplified view of life. They think that everything is going to work out. They're very naïve.

One example is that I saw a movie years ago—*Pollyanna*—a pre-teen girl who was a very nice girl, but she was very naïve. She thought in terms of with every person she sees. She used to say to them, "Think of the glad times"! Unfortunately, she was naïve to every circumstance in life, the reality of life and all the unfortunate things that happen to people.

Proverbs 22:3 "A prudent *one* foresees the evil and hides himself, **but the thoughtless plow ahead and are punished.**"

They learn from their mistakes, and very often the simple fools learn from their mistakes.

2. **the silly fool**—'ebiyl'—perverse and silly

This is a bit more serious! They often open up their mouth and it gets them into trouble!

Proverbs 10:14: "Wise ones store up knowledge, **but the mouth of the foolish is near ruin.**" When things go wrong he can get frustrated and angry and loses control.

Proverbs 27:3: "A stone *is* heavy, and sand *is* weighty... [Have you ever had a wheelbarrow full of wet sand, and how heavy that is?] ...**but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both.**" *He believes his own way of thinking is right!*

Proverbs 12:15: "**The way of a fool is right in his own eyes,** but he who listens to advice *is* wise." *Until you listen to advice, you are a fool!*

Proverbs 1:7: "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge, **but fools despise wisdom and instruction.**" *A fool certainly does not fear the Lord!*

It's hard to convince anyone that they're wrong, if they don't fear the Lord!

3. **the essential fool**—'keciyl'—one who rejects the correction of parents and selfish, stupid and silly

Many of the classifications do overlap! But this grossly getting more serious. This person is determined to make the wrong choices. They want to get immediate pleasure out of what they want to do.

Proverbs 10:23: “**To work out evil devices is as sport to a fool**, but a man of understanding has wisdom.”

You can see the contrast there of this type of fool and a man who listens and has understanding, who wants to know the right thing to do.

Proverbs 13:19: “The desire fulfilled is sweet to the soul, but *it is* **an abomination to fools to turn from evil**. He who walks with wise *men* shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (vs 19-20). *Severe punishment is prescribed to and essential fool!*

Proverbs 26:3: “A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the fool’s back.”

So it is pretty severe the punishment to this fool if he doesn’t turn from his evil way.

4. **the scorning fool, the cynic**—‘luwts’—they scoff, they have facial expressions of scorn

They have disdain and have contempt for anyone who disagrees with them. They have contempt for authorities like governments or any civil authorities and parents. So, it is pretty serious. ***They reject Truth and embrace what is abominable to God!***

Psalm 1:1: “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the **counsel of the wicked**, nor stand in the way of **sinners**, nor sit in **the seat of the scornful**.”

So, it gets more and more serious as time goes on! They detest people and ideas that contradict and they express scorn through derisive attitudes.

Does this remind you of the work attitude of people today. They have a deaf ear to rebuke.

Proverbs 13:1: “A wise son *heeds* his father’s instruction, **but a scorner does not hear rebuke**.”

They don’t hear it and they don’t listen to it! Those who attempt to lead in that way they will suffer wrath.

Proverbs 15:12: “**A scorner does not love one who corrects him**, nor will he go unto the wise.”

The direction that he’s going is obviously in the wrong direction. He doesn’t want to go God’s way.

Proverbs 9:7: “The one who rebukes a scorner gets shame to himself... [don’t even attempt it, don’t go there] ...and the one who rebukes a wicked one *gets* himself an insult. **Do not reprove a scorner, lest he hate you; give rebuke to a wise**

man, and he will love you” (vs 7-8).

You can see the contrast there! We are to learn discretion to be able to know which one is which. The ‘woke’ society will not love anyone who tries to correct them. But there is a positive side in:

Proverbs 21:11: “When the scorner is punished, **the simple is made wise**... [the first category of a fool] **...and when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge**.”

There is always the potential to change and go God’s way. *To learn to do the right thing and become wise!*

5. **the steadfast fool**—‘nibal’—this type of fool is downright mean

This is the most dangerous, stupid, wicked and vile person that one can imagine.

Psalm 14:1: “**The fool has said in his heart, There is no God!**” They are corrupt; they have done abominable works, there is none who does good.”

Psalm 53:1: “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, and have worked out abominable wickedness; there is no one who does good.”

They are self-confident, close-minded and is his own god! Attempts to change this sort of attitude would be futile and **would only be God Who can change such a mind!**

Romans 1:22: “While **professing themselves to be the wise ones, they became fools**.”

Verse 25_[transcriber’s correction]: “**Who exchanged the Truth of God for the lie; and they worshiped and served the created thing more than the One Who is Creator**, Who is blessed into the ages. Amen.”

This type of fool may worship themselves! Here we find a person who sort of fits this category:

1-Samuel 25:2: “And a certain man *was* in Maon, and his work *was* in Carmel. And the man *was* very great, and *had* three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. And he *was* shearing his sheep in Carmel. And the man’s name *was* Nabal and his wife’s name *was* Abigail. Now, *she was* a woman of good understanding and of a beautiful form. But the man *was* cruel and evil in his dealings. And he *was* of Caleb... [descended from Caleb] ...And David heard in the wilderness... [hiding from Saul] ...that Nabal *was* shearing his sheep” (vs 3-4).

Verse 5: “And David sent out ten young

men. And David said to the young men, ‘Go up to Carmel and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. And you shall say this, “Long life and peace *be* to you, and peace to your house, and peace to all that you have. And now I have heard that you have shearers. And we did not hurt your shepherds who were with us; neither was there anything missing to them all the while they were in Carmel. Ask your young men, and they will tell you. And let these young men find favor in your eyes, for we come in a good day. Please give whatever comes to your hand to your servants and to your son David”’ (vs 5-8).

They were polite enough and polite to ask for what they wanted and needed. But the question is: What would you expect from a steadfast fool? What sort of response would you get from a steadfast fool?

Verse 10: “And Nabal answered David’s servants and said, ‘Who *is* David? And who *is* the son of Jesse? The servants who have broken away, each man from his master, have multiplied. Shall I then take **my bread** and **my water** and **my meat** that I have killed for **my shearers**, and give *it* to men about whom I know not where they come from?”’ (vs 10-11).

Nabal would have heard of David, because from the time David was with Saul, it got around that Saul had killed his thousands and David his tens of thousands; David wouldn’t have been somebody who was unknown to Nabal. Anyway, the response from Nabal was not very favorable as you can imagine.

Verse 12: “And David’s young men turned their way and went again, and came and told him all those things.... [David was not happy with this response] ...And David said to his men, ‘Let each man gird on his sword.’ And they each one girded on his sword, and David also girded on his sword. And about four hundred men went up with David and two hundred stayed by the provisions. And one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal’s wife...” (vs 12-14).

Something had to be done here to prevent bloodshed. She made preparations for this. She made provisions and was prepared to meet David. She made a heartfelt plea to David.

Verse 25: “Please do not let my lord regard this man of worthlessness, Nabal, for as his name *is*, so he *is*. Nabal *is* his name, and foolishness *is* with him. And I, your handmaid, did not see the young men of my lord, whom you sent.”

Verse 32: “And David said to Abigail, ‘Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel, who sent you today to meet me. And blessed *is* your advice, and

blessed *are* you who have kept me from coming to shed blood today, and from avenging myself *with* my own hand. Now truly, *as* the LORD God of Israel lives, Who has kept me back from doing evil to you, for unless you had hurried and come to meet me, surely there would not have been left to Nabal by the morning light even one who pisses against the wall.’ And David received from her hand that which she had brought him, and said to her, ‘Go up in peace to your house. See, I have listened to your voice and have accepted your person”’ (vs 32-35).

Abigail accomplished with wisdom and with great discretion, and she was certainly very discreet in how she approached this. As a result of this:

Verse 36: “And Abigail came to Nabal. And behold, he held a feast in his house like the feast of a king. And Nabal’s heart *was* merry within him, for he *was* very drunk. And she did not tell him anything, little or much, until the morning light. And it came to pass in the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal and his wife had told him these things, his heart died within him and he became *like* a stone. And it came to pass about ten days *afterward* the LORD struck Nabal so that he died” (vs 36-38).

Once David found out about what happened to Nabal, he followed it up with Abigail and she eventually became his wife.

Verse 39: “And David heard that Nabal had died, and he said, ‘Blessed *is* the LORD who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and has kept His servant from evil, for the LORD has returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head.’ And David sent and spoke with Abigail to take her to him for a wife.”

Proverbs 26:4 “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him.”

Don’t engage anyone on their terms. In a situation like that, they have an attitude problem. You don’t approach anyone who has an attitude problem to try and change them.

Verse 5: “Answer a fool according to his folly, so that he may not be wise in his own conceit.”

This sort of person does not have an attitude problem. But it’s a matter of the condition that they are in. If they don’t have a bad attitude they can change from that.

Jesus Christ had many confrontations, there are many examples that He had interactions with people. Christ had the insight and the discretion to make the right response.

Mark 12:18: “Then the Sadducees, **who say there is no resurrection**, came to Him, and they

questioned Him, saying, ‘Master, Moses wrote for us that if the brother of anyone should die and leave behind a wife, but leave no children, then his brother should take his wife and raise up seed for his brother’” (vs 18-19).

Just think of some far fetched scenario which in real life is never likely to happen:

Verse 20: “*Now*, there were seven brothers; the first took a wife and died, leaving no seed; and the second took her and died, and neither did he leave seed; and the third likewise. And the seven had her and left no seed. Last of all the woman died also. Now then, in the resurrection, when they shall arise, to which of them shall she be wife? For all seven had her as wife” (vs 20-23).

How did they want Jesus to respond to this. They wanted Him to go down to their level with this scenario with seven brothers. They wanted to make the argument, either the first one or the last one. Or maybe the one whom she loved the most or the one who loved her the most. Then they would enter into an all out argument.

Verse 24: “Then Jesus answered them and said, ‘In *asking* this, do you not err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from *the* dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels who *are* in heaven.... [of the same composition as spirit beings] ...But concerning the dead, that they do rise, **have you not read**... [How many times did He ask this of the authorities? *They never did read!*] ...in the book of Moses about the burning bush, how God spoke to him, saying, “I *am* the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? He is not the God of *the* dead, but *the* God of *the* living. **Therefore, you err greatly**” (vs 24-27).

This is where Prov. 26 is applied:

Luke 20:1: “Now, it came to pass on one of those days, as He was teaching the people in the temple and proclaiming the Gospel, *that* the chief priests and the scribes came up with the elders.”

How many times has this happened. They try to trap Him.

Verse 2: “And spoke to Him, saying, ‘Tell us by what authority You do these things, and who gave You this authority?’”

We know that Jesus could do nothing unless God the Father gave it to Him (John 5:19).

Verse 3: “And He answered *and* said to them, ‘I also will ask you one thing, and you tell Me: The baptism of John, was it from heaven or from men?’ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘If we say, “From heaven,” He will say, “Why then

did you not believe him?’” But if we say, “From men,” all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded *that* John was a prophet.’ And they replied *that* they did not know where *it was* from” (vs 3-7).

Well, they looked at it from every angle *except* the Word of God!

Verse 8: “Then Jesus said to them, ‘Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.’”

John 4:13: “Jesus answered and said to her... [the woman at the well] ...‘Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; rather, the water that I will give him shall become a fountain of water within him, springing up into everlasting life’” (vs 13-14). *This is spiritual application!*

Verse 15: “The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, give me this water...’”

She had limited understanding, but she had a right attitude! She wanted to find out; she wanted to learn more. She kept up this interaction for quite a while. It’s very interesting because she was a Samaritan woman, a Gentile.

Verse 26: “Jesus said to her, ‘I Who speak to you am *He*.’” *Referring to that He was the Messiah!*

This is a verse, the first time in Scripture that this has been mentioned, that Jesus said that He was the Messiah.

She had a very good attitude and certain things came from this as we go further down in the chapter. She obviously talked to the Samaritans about this interaction that she had with Christ.

Verse 39: “Now many of the Samaritans from that city believed on Him because of the word of the woman, who testified, ‘He told me everything that I have done.’ Therefore, when the Samaritans came to Him, they asked Him to remain with them; and He remained there two days. And many more believed because of His word... [they believed from the heart] ...and they said to the woman, ‘We no longer believe because of your word, **for we have heard Him ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Christ, the Savior of the world**’” (vs 39-42).

This is showing that He’s going to be a Servant to the whole world. That Jesus Christ is the Messiah and Savior of the world through His death and resurrection. It’s opened to the world at God’s appointed time, first to us now. We are blessed to be part of the firstfruits. Then during the Millennium, it’s going to go to the Last Great Day.

Back to my personal example in Prov. 26:4 it was that scenario. This person would have been far better not to opened up about the Church whatsoever. I classify him as more toward being one of the scornful type where anything you say to him he would not believe it and it would be treated in a negative way. But this person will have his chance in the future and will be in the second resurrection. It will be at the Great White Throne Judgment when there will not be any Satan the devil around to deceive him. He will have his opportunity to open out and anyone who will teach him with discretion and love and compassion.

We are blessed to have this knowledge now. We're in training to learn to be discreet, to learn how to treat people in the right way; to have the right reaction to them.

2-Peter 3:18: "Rather, be growing in *the* grace and *the* knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...."

Isaiah 11:9: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My Holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

The knowledge of God will be taught during the Millennium. Everyone will have that opportunity to make the right choice without being deceived by Satan the devil!

Revelation 22:14: "**Blessed are those who keep His commandments**, that they may have the right to eat of the Tree of Life, and may enter by the gates into the city. But excluded are dogs, and sorcerers, and fornicators, and murderers, and idolaters, and everyone who loves and devises a lie" (vs 14-15).

In God's Kingdom there will not be any sin, no traces of any sin, because God will not accept that. *I can certainly guarantee that in God's Kingdom there will not be any fools!*

Scriptural References:

- 1) Proverbs 26:4-5
- 2) Matthew 22:39
- 3) Matthew 7:6
- 4) Proverbs 26:4, 1, 7-8, 12, 10
- 5) Proverbs 22:3
- 6) Proverbs 10:14
- 7) Proverbs 27:3
- 8) Proverbs 12:15
- 9) Proverbs 1:7
- 10) Proverbs 10:23
- 11) Proverbs 13:19-20
- 12) Proverbs 26:3

- 13) Psalm 1:1
- 14) Proverbs 13:1
- 15) Proverbs 15:12
- 16) Proverbs 9:7-8
- 17) Proverbs 21:11
- 18) Psalm 14:1
- 19) Psalm 53:1
- 20) Romans 1:22, 25
- 21) 1 Samuel 25:2-8, 10-14, 25, 32-39
- 22) Proverbs 26:4-5
- 23) Mark 12:18-27
- 24) Luke 20:1-8
- 25) John 4:13-15, 26, 39-42
- 26) 2-Peter 3:18
- 27) Isaiah 11:9
- 28) Revelation 22:14-15

Scriptures referenced, not quoted: John 5:19

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