

Proverbs 26:1-28

I'm sure that all of you can pretty much ignore the 1st 12 Vs simply due to the fact that they won't apply to you. They deal pretty much exclusively w/the fool 😊.

& Just be aware of the fact that when the bible speaks of the "fool" it's not speaking someone who has a mental deficiency or abnormality. The "fool" could be brilliant intellectually, but he doesn't make wise choices practically. **His rationale is eschewed. He doesn't base his way from a biblical worldview, he doesn't appeal to the scripture, he'll just do whatever seems right in his own eyes (the type of man that our culture seems [many times] to esteem).** As a matter of fact the Psalmist has said, **"The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt,"**¹ Or even "No God", the idea being that a fool rejects God as the authority, does what's right in his own eyes leading to his own misery.

Vs 1

When you have an economy that is based on grain that's grown in the field, snow in the summer; rain in the time of harvest isn't only bad it can be disastrous... **How many times (even around here) when the spring is in full force, trees are leafing, flowers are blooming & then you get the word from your news channel (or weather app) that frost is going to settle in that night & suddenly people are scrambling to get things covered & protected from the frost because it can kill the flower or ruin those things which would otherwise bud forth & bring fruit?**

That's the idea here. It's disastrous to give a position of honor to a fool. It's out of place, it doesn't yield good fruit, but rather it works ruin & could actually get in the way of what God may be doing in people's lives, they were budding forth, bringing fruit, but this fool uprooted all that. He could hinder/harm people who follow him. You place him in a position of honor, others follow him, far from helping them, it hurts them.

Vs 2

He's talking about birds that don't settle in for too long. They land for a moment & then fly to another branch or off they go to the power line. They'll land on the ground & then fly off in a matter of seconds.

He's saying that you don't need to be worried about someone putting a curse on you if you've done nothing to bring something negative on you.

He's saying, "Don't give heed to superstition. There are no magical properties to someone's curse, they can't speak harm or ill will over you.

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). [Ps 14:1]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² The New King James Version. (1982). [Ps 22:5]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

In the book of Numbers you discover Balak (a Moabite king) hired a man named Balaam because he wanted Balaam to place a curse on the nation of Israel as they were making their way to the Promised Land. But whenever he'd go through his "ritual windup", he couldn't curse them, instead he blessed them. & When you read Deut 23 you find Moses referring to that & he says, "*...the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam, but the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loves you.*"² Who is it that has the authority to give a curse its power? If God doesn't ratify it, it's not going to happen, right? You're a child of God, He's not out to get you, He loves you. Don't give way to superstitious thoughts. Paul said it like this, "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*" Rom 8:31

Vs 3

Sometimes it takes a whip to motivate a horse unto following the right course of action. Or people put a bit & bridle in the donkey's mouth so it will do what it's supposed to. & What Solomon is saying here is that a fool won't respond to simple instruction. But rather too often the only thing that will motivate a fool unto the right course of action is discipline. He won't respond to an appeal to his intellect or rationalization, if he's not punished he won't tow the line.

Vs 4-5

This is one of those sections of scripture that has invoked a lot of question over the years. People want to know, "Which is it! Do I answer him, or do I not answer him?" & The answer (according to Solomon) is, "Yes!" 😊

I'll admit that a surface reading appears contradictory; it's not. All he is saying is, "Hey, don't stoop to the fools level when you respond to him but deal w/him appropriately lest he think more highly of himself than he ought."

Don't cast your pearls before swine, don't get pulled into an argument that causes you to be just as foolish. Don't return reviling for reviling... or insult for insult (you get the idea). Yet at the same time there *is a time* to expose his folly/foolishness so that he can see it for what it is & not feel as though he really got one over on you, (feeling as though he's wise in his own eyes).

& Granted there will be a measure of discernment that is needed on your end to determine when is the right time to walk away & when is the right time to engage.

² The New King James Version. (1982). [Dt 23:5]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Perhaps consider who's around, how is what they're saying impacting others. Is it best to simply walk away lest people give ear to him, or is it the right time to say your piece so that people don't think you agree w/him but rather you show them in the ridiculous position they've taken? Again, to me it seems to be a situation that you simply have to discern in the moment.

Vs 6

To deliver a message by the hand of a fool is only to harm yourself. It's like cutting off your own feet (it probably won't get delivered). You're only hurting yourself. (Vs 7 is similar).

Vs 7

It's useless. He doesn't know what to do w/it, he doesn't know how to apply it, it does him no good whatsoever. What does this tell us? That just *having the word* isn't enough. You've got to know what *to do* w/the word.

Some people will use the word of God in incredibly "lame" ways (like legs that hang limp). They don't rightly divide it, they don't appropriately apply it ("If you just give my ministry God will return your investment 100 fold"), that's "lame". It's not true & it's a misappropriation of the Word. It plays on people's carnal appetites. Suddenly I'm moved to give, not for the glory of God & the increase of His kingdom, but so that I can be rich!

"Like the legs of the lame that hang limp is a proverb in the mouth of fools." It's *there*; its packed w/potential but it'll never do them (or anyone else) any good.

Vs 8-11

Vs 8-9 point to the fact that it's counterproductive to entrust things to a fool. A sling is meant to cast a stone, if you tie the stone in the pocket of the sling it's counterproductive (not to mention stupid). So to place a fool in a position of honor will be counterproductive.

Vs 9 (from what I gather) doesn't really refer to a thorn going into the hand of a drunk (meaning that he's only going to hurt himself w/it). But it seems to indicate more the fact of a branch of a thorn bush being waved around by a drunk. He's not only carelessly positioned to bring harm to himself, but he's going to hurt others as well. Again, Solomon is telling us that it's dangerous for a fool to learn the a bible Vs if he doesn't know how to apply it in his own life & in the lives of others. The point being that bad teaching can do more damage than good. Paul tells us to rightly divide God's word, involved in that is rightly applying it as well.

Now in Matt Ch 5 Jesus said, *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."*³

Meaning that there is a common grace that God extends to all of mankind. He doesn't only allow the sun to shine on those who are His but everyone else lives in the dark. Everyone, good & evil are allowed to benefit from the sun that He created. That's kind of along the same lines as Vs 10 here in that God give the fool his hire, the transgressor his wages. God doesn't condone sin, He's not standing behind acting foolishly, but He loves each person on this planet & desires that they come to know Him. So He doesn't just kill everyone who doesn't know Him (or we'd all already be dead). He gives them the essentials they need to live just the same. He's gracious & full of compassion.

If Vs 11 sounds familiar it's because Peter picked it up & applied it in his 2nd epistle. "As a dog returns to his vomit, so a fool repeats his folly." The picture is of the repulsive nature of a person returning to their sin. When you see a dog vomit & then return to eat it, you're disgusted, it's gross, distasteful, detrimental. Yet people return to those gross, repulsive, destructive habits of sin all the time... Solomon says that this is what that's like.

Listen, it's one thing for a person to fail or to fall. That happens, but it's another thing altogether for a person to continually return to his folly over & over again. That's not wisdom, it's foolish.

& For all that we've learned about the fool (he's dangerous to himself & others, he's counterproductive to the agenda at hand, he doesn't learn from his own folly, he just continues down his self-destructive path) there's one thing still worse than a fool. Vs 12...

"A man wise in his own eyes." A proud individual, blind to his own need, yet how often we display the tendency of pride when we fail to pray & seek the heart & direction of God in a given matter. We don't see the need because we feel we know what's best. One has said, "There is no safer condition of soul, than that self-distrust, that knowledge of ignorance, which drives us persistently to seek for the wisdom which comes from above." (Morgan)

Vs 13-16

³ The New King James Version. (1982). [Mt 5:43-45]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

From the fool to the sluggard... Vs 13 is uncovering the excuses men will make to avoid work. "There's a lion in the street!" The thought is, "I can't come outside, it's dangerous to be out there!" The lazy man will work, but only work at avoiding work 😊. He stays glued to his bed like a door turning on its hinges. **Now it's not saying that he likes to hit the snooze 6-12 times (though we could certainly draw an application there I suppose 😊). But that he refuses to get up unless he's forced to due to hunger or some other necessity.**

That's the idea of Vs 15, he won't even really feed himself or take care of his personal needs. Now, it's kind of a comical picture to see someone so lazy that they won't even feed themselves. Yet I feel like on a spiritual level many of us can be just like this, we won't crack open the word, we neglect to feed our souls the bread of life (we're too lazy).

Vs 16 is interesting; we learn that though the lazy individual may lack energy & initiative, he certainly doesn't lack a high opinion of himself! He can give anyone/everyone a reason why he can't get to work! He's wiser than 7 men who answer sensibly. 7 men simply pointing to any & everyone who may seek to reason w/him.

Vs 17

We've got the busybody in view here. Someone who's always busy about somebody else's business. Some people just can't not jump in when other people are arguing or debating back & forth about something. It has nothing to do w/them, but they're jumping in nonetheless. But when you play w/fire it's just a matter of time before you get burned. That's what Solomon is saying here. It's a dangerous game to take a dog by the ears. You can anticipate getting bit when you let go. Dog's aren't fond of that game...

Even so you're asking for trouble when you get involved in a situation that you really don't know anything about. It could be a marriage dispute, or simply 2 people arguing back & forth, it might be a disagreement between friends. Wisdom says that if it doesn't involve you, just stay out of it lest it come back to bite you.

Vs 18-19

You're only spreading destruction & devastation when you deceive someone (making trouble) & then you're all, "I was only joking man, chill out!" The damage is already done. Now he's not saying that we can't have a sense of humor, but when you're all the time messing w/people w/no regard for how you're making them feel, it's a problem. & It shows your lack of wisdom all the more when I try to make them feel bad for feeling bad!

Rather than saying, “Man I’m so sorry, I didn’t realize that was going to upset you or I never would have done that.” We say, “Dude, what’s wrong w/you! Can’t you take a joke!” “Sure, I can take a joke, you just don’t have a dime’s worth of discernment, it wasn’t called for or appropriate in this situation.” Use wisdom, be discerning & sensitive to others & what’s going on in their lives.

Vs 20-22

This is a great section of scripture because it’s the remedy for church splits, for character assassination & so much destruction in the body of Christ. People who are willing to listen to & spread rumors are as fuel to a fire.

You take the wood or the charcoal from the fire & it’ll go out. You stop the gossip train, you refuse to listen & set in motion a proper rebuke & the rumor mill will come to a close... As long as there’s an ear to receive & a tongue to pass it on, slander will continue to circulate. But once someone is willing to stop the madness, the cancer quits spreading.

It’s like when you get one of those forwards in your FB messenger or something, “If you don’t have 20 seconds to show that you care then don’t forward this.” Well, I don’t care & it dies w/me. We all understand that mentality on the social media platform; how much more in the daily affairs of life? **The talebearer & tale hearer are agents of discord, division, contention & strife. Strife doesn’t create itself, it has a maker. The maker is the one who shares the gossip. & Its hard I know, if you just whisper something people will believe it.**

& The quieter you say it, the more irresistible it becomes, it puts me on the “inside”. It’s like a tasty trifle, I chew it up for all it’s worth & it assimilates into who I am. Now it’s influencing the way I see that person or that situation (even if it’s not true). **That’s why God gave a strong word about establishing the truth of a matter before we act upon it. Because even inaccurate information can distort our perspective; we’ve got to be real careful about what we’re willing to receive from people.**

Vs 23

People can speak w/power & persuasion, yet their heart may be wicked. Things look good on the surface but underneath they’re defiled. This is what Jesus was pointing to when He said, **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.**

Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also."⁴ People trying to cover their evil or self-seeking motives by charismatic conversation, man may look to the outward appearance but God is searching the heart.

Vs 24-26

Again the picture is one of someone who portrays themselves as one thing but in truth they are another thing. They don't want to give up their hate, but don't want to be known as a hater. So they say nice things to your face, but their heart isn't with you.

But notice it's not just you he's deceiving, he lays up deceit *w/in himself*. Somewhere in his mind he's convinced himself that he's a better man than he really is. "When he speaks kindly do not believe him." Don't trust a man who's not real w/you, who's not honest w/you. Because his words don't reflect the truth of his heart.

& We see again the mention of 7 (as in Vs 16). Solomon isn't saying, "Lies, hatred, wickedness & so on up to 7 things", he's speaking a fullness, that his heart isn't full of righteousness it's full of wickedness; lies & deceit. **But sooner or later God will "out" him (reveal him) for who he is. As 1 old puritan commentator put it, "He shall be detected and detested of all, sooner or later. God will wash off his varnish with rivers of brimstone."** (Trapp) (That dude didn't mince words! 😊)

Vs 27-28

Vs 27. God seems to delight in a sense of poetic justice. The one who sows to the wind will reap the whirlwind. To seek to set a trap for others will be to fall in the trap your self. We see this is the book of Esther w/Haman, those who had Daniel put in the lion's den wound up there themselves. God just has this way of bringing things full circle.

Finally Vs 28 speaks again to lies & flattery. Lying about someone is birthed out of hatred for that person or those people. You might not like that, but the bible calls a spade a spade, if you loved that person you wouldn't lie about that person, or lead someone to be tainted in their perspective of that person.

Flattery is deceitful as well, it's manipulative. I'll flatter you if I want something *from* you. You see, the difference between flattery & encouragement that is godly is that if I'm encouraging you I'm simply building you up, acknowledging what God is doing in your life. But flattery isn't really for you, somehow it'll serve me.

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982). (Mt 23:25-26). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Be it just to gain your attention & cause you to think a little more highly of me, perhaps there's something I believe you can do for me... Godly encouragement is for you, flattery (ultimately) serves me.

So may the Lord help us to keep our motives in check. Building one another up, encouraging & edifying one another, glorifying Him in what we say & do...

Prayer Points:

God search our hearts, try us & know our anxieties, see if there be any wicked way in us & lead us in the way everlasting. Thank You for the practical nature of wisdom, may we be doers of *Your* word, guarding *our words*, speaking w/grace in our heart toward the hearers.