

## AM I THE FOOL?

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**SERIES: HOW TO: LIFE | WEEK 3 | 6.28.2020**

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Yeah, great are You, Lord. What a wonderful morning to get into His Word, to sing worship with you all. Thank you so much band, it's just wonderful, thank you for leading us in worship, "Great Are You, Lord"—what better words than that that we need to hear. This in the season with everything that's going on.

If you've been checking in with us recently, Pastor Lee, who has taken a few days vacation right now with his family, has been bringing us through Proverbs, and unlike our last on Proverbs we're gonna jump around a little bit. Although Lee started out in the first few chapters, I'm gonna be bringing us to Proverbs 26 in just a few minutes to talk about the fool. But if you'll remember, Lee brought up a few things; he started off talking about how the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. What Proverbs 26 is gonna do for us this morning is it's gonna show us the opposite, so really what I want you to be thinking about as we're looking at Proverbs 26 and as we're thinking about it, how would you word it? How would you word the opposite of the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom? What is the opposite of that? Proverbs 26 is gonna take a look at that and give us some insight.

But you know, I don't if any of y'all – one of my favorite comedians is Brian Regan and he's funny and he's clean as well, and he likes to start off one of his acts and he says, "You know. I'm just trying to get through life without looking stupid, but I'm not doing too good." This is what he says and it's pretty funny. He goes through a few other examples there where he talks about, you know, getting off the elevator prematurely and then having to step back on and, like, tell people, "Uh, you know, that floor looked the same as every other floor." Or he talks about the "i" before "e" rule and not knowing how to use it and messing up in emails, all sorts of funny things. But this chapter is deeper than that; this chapter isn't just about us looking silly, this is actually a spiritual issue; it's an issue of foolishness that we're gonna get into. And you know what, just amidst everything that's going on, just everything that's going on in life, just amidst a pandemic and everything that's going on with race and cultures and riots and all the different things, it's even that much more that we need this passage to look at because things start to surface when you're under stress.

A good friend of mine who goes to the church here, Scott Edwards, who's over the Peacemaker Centers, he says, "You know, in these times of stress things that have always been there tend to come to the surface." And so we're gonna see and there's some warnings in here, but there's also a lot of ways that Proverbs points us to just living wisely. And as Lee mentioned last week, Proverbs aren't promises; Proverbs are really what's most probable. So they're not promises saying life will exactly work out this way, it's just saying by living through this wisdom it's most probable that you're gonna have a blessed life.

So this is what we're gonna do, we're gonna take a look at Proverbs 26:1-12 and I'm gonna read it to you all and as I'm reading it what I want you to do is I want you to go into the chat, I want you to use this chat right now and as I'm reading these Proverbs 26:1-12—and you could turn there if you like—I want you to write out just observations. What jumps off the page at you? We want to let the Word just speak for us, speak for itself, what observations you make. Maybe there's a metaphor in there and maybe there's a word, just what do you see? I'd encourage you to write it in the chat and share it with others as we jump into this. Let me put on my trusty reading glasses here, hate to say it, I'm getting that old that I need my reading glasses. Proverbs 26, verse 1:

<sup>1</sup> *Like snow in summer or rain in harvest,  
so honor is not fitting for a fool.*

<sup>2</sup> *Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a swallow in its flying,  
a curse that is causeless does not alight.*

<sup>3</sup> *A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey,*

- and a rod for the back of fools.*
- <sup>4</sup> *Answer not a fool according to his folly,  
lest you be like him yourself.*
- <sup>5</sup> *Answer a fool according to his folly,  
lest he be wise in his own eyes.*
- <sup>6</sup> *Whoever sends a message by the hand of a fool  
cuts off his own feet and drinks violence.*
- <sup>7</sup> *Like a lame man's legs, which hang useless,  
is a proverb in the mouth of fools.*
- <sup>8</sup> *Like one who binds the stone in the sling  
is one who gives honor to a fool.*
- <sup>9</sup> *Like a thorn that goes up into the hand of a drunkard  
is a proverb in the mouth of fools.*
- <sup>10</sup> *Like an archer who wounds everyone  
is one who hires a passing fool or drunkard.*
- <sup>11</sup> *Like a dog that returns to his vomit  
is a fool who repeats his folly.*
- <sup>12</sup> *Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes?  
There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

– PROVERBS 26:1-12 (ESV)

We're gonna get up to that and there's so much—what I love about this passage, what I love about Scripture just in general, some observations, I love the word *perspicuity*. If you're at home right now say *perspicuity*, it just has a sweet ring to it. What *perspicuity* is – Scripture has *perspicuity* – so what that means is a little kid, you could read it to a little kid and they'll get a level of understanding out of the Scripture, but you could also study it for entire life and you could continue to get wisdom out of it. I feel like the more I've read through Proverbs 26, the more I study it, it's kind of like the ocean. A little kid could play in the surf and have a lot of fun, or you can take a submarine down to the bottom of the trench and you could just explore all the mysteries of the ocean. And so you find that in the Scripture.

You also see there's a bunch of likes and there's metaphors and similes, there's words that – they're using pictures of nature, Solomon loves nature in here and he's specifically, in Chapter 26, he specifically uses a lot of pictures of nature to help us better understand the fool. And so it's also, you see – it's just like a string of sarcasm on commentary sites, you just see it's like sarcasm after sarcasm, a bunch of likes and also the name the fool is mentioned in 11 out of 12 verses. Just a few observations. What we're gonna do just like Lee last week did his three P's, I'm gonna do my three I's. And Lee mentioned that he doesn't like doing that, I love doing it. I love how memorable it is to do, so I'm gonna do three I's this morning with you as we look into Proverbs Chapter 26.

## **IDENTIFYING a fool and his trap**

The first "I" we're gonna get into in verses 1-3, it's really identifying a fool and his trap and the dangers of the fool, so identifying him. So if we look down here in the Scriptures, let's jump right in. We see that there's actually three things in nature that Solomon uses, three different examples. He uses one, a fool is as dangerous as a snow and a rain that's outside the proper time in harvest. The second one he uses is he's like a sparrow and is flitting or is flying. And the third is he compares him to a horse or a donkey. So if we just go through them, what do we learn about this? So right off the bat like snow or rain in harvest, if you're living in this agricultural society that's dangerous, that's scary, that's like if you're a farmer nowadays if you have your corn crop out in the middle of the

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summer you get just torrential rain that floods it, it ends up rotting the roots. It makes them shake a little bit. This is the sort of thing that a farmer is really scared about happening because it's just ruined. It's like maybe from the IT world and you're doing—I'm not in the IT world—but if you're doing like, I know, you guys have to like download from one computer to the next and the big upload to the cloud, something along those lines, just imagine if all the electricity went out. I know you'd have a lot of backups, but imagine if all your backups just got destroyed. That's the feeling. There's a lot of feelings that come out in Proverbs 26. It's dangerous, a fool is dangerous. That's one of the first things we learn.

Then we go down here and says, *"Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a swallow in its flying, a curse that is causeless does not alight."* And then, *"A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey,"* so now what's going on? It took me a while. Listen folks, if you're just reading this for the first time, I read it so many times, read so many commentaries on it, really just getting a sense, what's really Solomon, King Solomon who wrote this, trying to tell us about a fool? There's really two sides here. On one you have this swallow, the flitting swallow, I thought that word was interesting, that's what gave me the first clue. You've got this flitting swallow who flies and is a little aimless and then darts in, lands on a branch, sits there for a second and then darts off to another branch, aimless fluttering all over the sky. So a fluttering swallow what that tells us about identifying a fool is that a foolish person tends to jump from one idea to the next, seems to be opinionated on all things, even when they don't know much about it they'll land on one tree and they'll cast their opinion, their judgments, their curses even. The Scripture specifically talks about curses. Back in that day they really thought that cursing someone had some objective truth to it, that when somebody's words spoke it it actually had a reality to it, and this Proverb is actually telling us that that's not true. So it might be the opinionated swallow, that's the person, the fool who jumps around, gives their opinion, has an idea about everything.

You know, back on the team I used to lead we used to say that we only had a few passion quarters when we would be having a team discussion because we knew that you couldn't be passionate about everything. We said you have four quarters worth a dollar of passion, if you have a couple hour meeting, planning meeting, and you can't use them all. And so a wise person realizes you can't be passionate about everything, you have to let some things go; but then on the other hand, let's jump over this mule and donkey. You all can picture a mule, right? I got that picture of a mule where you got the rope around his neck he's got his hooves dug in and there was no moving, no budging that mule; hard to change their mind, a little stubborn that fool might be. Unlike the flitting swallow that jumps from idea to the idea next idea, the stubborn donkey gets their feet planted and they won't listen to anybody. They get this idea set in their head and they're not open enough to listen to anybody else what their thoughts are.



You know, as I look at these two I think it's the mule and the donkey, the horse, that I might resonate more so with. I don't see myself so much as this flitting sparrow, maybe when I was younger, but I think the one trap I might fall into is that mule and donkey. You know, that type of fool loves to land planes and tell everybody this is where the planes land, and I've had to learn because I've made a number of mistakes myself in this area is I need to communicate and be thinking about with people—if you ever interact with me on any level in planning, you might hear me say this, "So hey guys, just to give us an idea of where, you know, at least what I'm thinking where we're going," I'd say, "let's try to land the plane on this tarmac. But if it's the wrong one, just let me know and we'll take this plane off again." So I'm trying to live wisely but I know my propensity is I want to land that plane and just make a decision without listening to anybody else. So we've got these two different types of fools that give us that little bit of wisdom of what it looks like.

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Okay, I've got another question for you in the chat, are you ready? I'm actually gonna give you an A-B-C or D answer, I do this a lot of times when we're doing Beyond the Building or Lobby Time, I'm gonna give you guys an opportunity to chime in here. So I'm gonna tell you a story about a fool in the Old Testament. This was written by Solomon so he would have been aware of this fella. Whose name in the Old Testament actually means "fool"? I'll give you four choices to choose from, okay? Guy or gal here: Is it Balaam? Choice "A" – Balaam, that's the guy who heard the donkey talking to him, okay? That's "A." Is it "B" – Jezebel, that's the woman who was married to King Ahab who tried to kill Elijah, if you remember that, Elijah the prophet? Is it "C" – is it Nabal, that's the guy who had a confrontation with David when David was off in the wilderness estranged from Saul, but then Abigail his wife stepped in. Or is it "D" – is it Haman from the book of Esther? Haman, who wanted to try to get after the Jews and he ended up getting hung himself. You got your answer? You got it in the chat, A-B-C or D? Dude, the answer is actually C, it's Nabal.

- A. Balaam
- B. Jezebel
- C. Nabal
- D. Haman

So Nabal is actually – his name is rooted in the word for fool, which is amazing and really strange, we're not sure how his name came to be that way, but if you'll remember the story at all it's in 1st Samuel 25, this illustrates a fool. We see that Nabal is actually – he's a rich ruler, he's a rich guy, has got a lot of wealth and David before he was King he was out in the wilderness and his men were protecting the shepherds of Nabal. He was protecting them and he did something that was actually culturally very normal to do, he went to Nabal and he said, "Hey, amidst this feast could you provide some food and some whatever you have at hand for my men?" And Nabal, what he ended up doing is, "No, I'm not gonna do that." He made judgments, he cast judgments on David, quick judgments, false judgments. David went to Nabal thinking Nabal was gonna honor him and in turn what he did is he tried to make him look stupid.

And what ended up happening here and this the warning, what David almost ended up doing, he was so offended he almost got pulled into the fool's foolishness, he actually wanted to go kill the man. He wanted to take his men and start a war. It would have been a blotch on his history and on his story, but Abigail stepped in and Abigail gave David some wisdom and said, "No, don't, let the Lord fight your battles. You don't need to go after this man." And so David relented and it turned into a story that actually shows what kind of man David was, who trusted in the Lord. And so we've got this fool and we've got the trap of the fool which is actually gonna lead us into this next section.

So we said how do we identify the fool and what's their trap, and we illustrated it with Nabal. The second thing is how do you interact with a fool? What did we learn from David and what are we gonna learn from this passage here? Let's take a look at verses 4 & 5, let me read them to you again:

*<sup>4</sup> Answer not a fool according to his folly,  
lest you be like him yourself.*

*<sup>5</sup> Answer a fool according to his folly,  
lest he be wise in his own eyes.*

– PROVERBS 26:4-5 (ESV)

### INTERACTING should I speak or not speak

You know, this is a very famous duo here. A lot of people might argue that this is a contradiction in Scripture because if you read it, the first verse says don't answer the fool because you're going to be like him, and then verse 5, the second verse, says no, you should answer them to make sure that he's not foolish in his own folly. And so what's going on here? Some of the things that you learn from this—really, it's not a contradiction, it's not a contradiction. But the first thing to learn in

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interacting with the fool, with foolish people, it's complicated. Interacting with people in general is complicated. There's no like  $A + B = C$  in how do you actually resolve conflict with something. It's not on all occasions just keep your mouth shut, and it's certainly not on all occasions that you're supposed to go after a person and actually give them wisdom or actually speak back to them. There's a lot of danger that's involved and it's not an easy task. You know, I heard it said this way: "In negligible matters you should ignore those negligible matters when people bring them up, but in issues that matter you may need to speak up." I also appreciate in Proverbs 26:4-5 that it starts out with being silent. That's actually verse 4, the default being not to answer versus answering, and then it goes into verse 5 that you do answer him according to his folly to help him be wise.

You know, here's another thing for the chat, think about those situations here. It's hard to give a story personally because I don't want to throw anybody out there but this happens all the time doesn't it, where people are being foolish or you have these interactions. I have this all the time and especially, like I said in these times of stress, more of these situations tend to happen. So this is great, this is great wisdom for us, especially in these days. Think about one of those examples; maybe it's a boss, you had an issue with a boss where they made a quick decision, something that affected your life and they didn't have all the answers; maybe it's your child, maybe your child is making bad decisions and you need to come alongside your child—do you say something to them or do you not? Do you listen? Do you actually give them wisdom? What do you do? Can you start to feel that conflict? Maybe it's a family member, maybe there's diverse, maybe there's very despairing, you know, perspectives on what's going on in today's world. And so what do you do when people start bringing those things up to you?

First of all, you pray, you recognize that it's a difficult situation, you gotta leave it up to the Lord, you gotta ask Him, should I speak or should I not speak? Think about that example and I want you to put in the chat how does it make you feel? Give me some emotions in the chat. Feel it, how does that feel in the chat? Give me some of those emotions. The example I will use though is Jesus, what a great example, right? Jesus always has. There's wonderful examples from Jesus in John Chapter 8, do you remember this one where Jesus and the Pharisees coming to him with a woman who was caught in adultery. Do you remember this story, where they brought this woman in public embarrassing her and they were trying to trap Jesus? So this woman's caught in adultery, "Moses said we're supposed to stone her," so they wanted to kill this woman. So in front of Jesus they wanted to trap Jesus and say, "Jesus, are You gonna follow Moses' law?" Or are You gonna fall into the trap of saying let's kill this woman—puts Him in a very difficult – between a rock and a hard place, really. What does Jesus do? He's so awesome, Jesus is awesome, He gives us a great example. He stays quiet at first, he bends down and He starts writing in the sand. I wish I knew what He was writing, no one really knows what He's writing, everyone starts to speculate.

Some of the questions in my head that maybe He's even thinking about in the moment, where's the man? If you caught her in adultery, where's the man who she was sleeping with? Why in the world were you watching? Like, how did you trap her? What's really going on here? He stays quiet at first, writes in the sand, but then He speaks—remember His famous words? He says, "Hey, he who is without sin, you cast the first stone." So He speaks wisely. Don't you want to be like Jesus, where He knows how to balance them? Maybe He was praying. I bet He was praying as He's writing in the dirt. Maybe He was writing out a prayer. Who knows what He was doing, but He just showed great wisdom.

So now you've got these emotions, right? We've got these emotions, Proverbs—remember the word perspicuity—this is the one that hit me off, like hit me on the side of the head a little bit as I was studying it, because the next section that we're gonna jump in there's kind of this verse in-between verse 6, before we jump in the next section I find it very interesting. Think about you're having this problem

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with your boss or a co-worker—should I say something, should I not say something? You know what we end up doing? Let's write a quick email. Let's write a quick email and just get it off our chest. You know how many emails I've gotten that somebody wrote at 1:00 a.m. in the morning? You could just tell that they're wrestling through with it and they're trying to get it out. You know what verse 6 says?

*<sup>6</sup> Whoever sends a message by the hand of a fool  
cuts off his own feet and drinks violence.*

– PROVERBS 26:6 (ESV)

This is the big idea for me from this passage that I pulled away, just the warning that an email is actually a fool also. I don't know if Solomon was actually thinking about it, this is a pretty big perhaps that I'm going after here, but I just found it interesting that in the midst of that conflict—should I say something, should I not say something—the very next verse talks about sending a message. So if you want to be practical at all, if you're in that moment and you're not sure if you should say something or not say something, don't send an email. Emails are misunderstood. Emails are gonna cut off your own legs, you're gonna drink violence, it's gonna make it even worse. You gotta call people up. You gotta have a face-to-face with them. Example after example, I'm like should I send this person an email? Emails do great things, don't get me wrong, I send emails every day. Great for conveying information, emails are great for telling people how great they're doing—emails are terrible for resolving conflict though. And so don't make that mistake, that's another little trap, that's just maybe a Rob rule that I try to live with.



So then we jump on. So we identified the mule and the sparrow, then we talked about the tension of interacting with them, sometimes just stay quiet, sometimes you need to say things, you need to rely on the Spirit. Now we jump into this next section and really, this is the climax, this is the climax that it gets to in verse 12. And so as you look through here what I want you to do, take a look through it, I read it through already but this next section 6-11 is held together by two different things. The first thing you'll probably notice is verses 7-11 has a whole bunch of similes—the word *like*, remember that from grade school? Similes are when something's held together by like or as, and so we have a whole bunch of likes that happen that give us some more insight into what a fool is like. But then if you read it a little bit further, if you're a little bit more into English and grammar or maybe poetry, you'll actually see that the sentence structure goes starting with verse 6, you guys familiar with this – A, B, C, D, A – kind of like poetry? And you see in verse 6 it talks about doing business with a fool; verse 7 talks about giving a proverb to a fool; verse 8 talks about honoring a fool; and then back to B, [verse] 9 talks about Proverbs in the mouth a fool; and verse 10 talks about hiring a fool.

Take a look at those again and in the chat – what other emotions come to mind for you as you see these similes? Write in the chat all these different likes, how do you start feeling as you talk about the thorn or you talk about the lame man's legs, or you talk about even the sling, you know, this sling it's like putting a stone in a sling and the stones are never gonna leave. So there's a level of pain and a level of danger when it comes to a fool, and so like a sling you could be whipping around and it'll hit you right in the back of the head. It's like having a bullet that explodes in the barrel, it could cause great danger. I wish we could go into each one of these because there's a lot of depth to this. There's a lot of depth to each one of these.

But the dog that returns to his vomit. I don't know if you've noticed but I've been kind of interchanging between foolishness and being a fool. This dog returning to his vomit actually gives us more clarity on what the difference is. A fool is someone who continues in their foolishness. You know, like I said

Brian Regan, it's not just about doing silly things in people's eyes but foolishness – doing things over and over again – makes you a fool. And you know how just gross that is according to this passage? It's like a dog returning to his vomit. Very descriptive, very gross. If you think about it some of you who might have a light stomach could even get a little sick by it, and there's a building of emotion right up to this dog that returns to his vomit up until verse 12. Verse 12 is a zinger and I think it's actually one of the main points of this whole Proverb that it's building up to. It says:



*Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes?  
There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

– PROVERBS 26:12 (ESV)

## **FOOL / FOOLISHNESS is this talking about me**

You know, this whole time we've been talking about in this passage—how do you identify a fool and how do you interact with him—it's almost like we're pointing at somebody else. And you guys all know that whole thing, you got three fingers pointing at yourself when you're pointing at someone else. Really, this is pointing it back on us, really helping us to say to ourselves, "Man, am I the foolish one?" That's the danger of being a fool, isn't it? You think a fool sits there and says to himself, "I'm a fool right now"? There's a blind spot. How do you know if you're being a fool? What's really – what does that look like? It's really just one verse in [Chapter] 26, it's just that verse 12 and it's almost like it sneaks up on you and gives you a punch, like you get you get punched by verse 12. You think you're talking about somebody else and all of a sudden, "Man, this is talking about me! Am I the fool with a blind spot? Am I being a mule? Or am I being that bird? Is it talking about me?" Very, very interesting thought.

You remember how I was talking about what is the opposite of the fear of the Lord is the beginning of the wisdom—might I propose to you that the opposite phrase might be pride in oneself is the beginning

## **Pride in oneself is the beginning of foolishness.**

of foolishness. The example I think of, and this is one of I've kept with me for years, is the story of Moses and the rock, we see it in Numbers 20. The interesting thing about Moses, you all know Moses, the guy who brought them out of Egypt, all the Israelites, and then they wandered the desert for 40 years. The interesting thing about Moses is earlier on in Numbers it actually says that Moses was the most humble man in the entire world, inspired by God. It might have been Moses writing it which is really funny, but it was inspired by God and was intended to be in there, in Numbers 12, that he was the most humble man; and then the circumstances of life, the stresses, things started boiling to the surface, coming to the surface. They're in the desert, the people are tired and complaining, the people are constantly complaining, they want to go back to Egypt. You guys know this story.

Right before this—so at one point he does go to the rock and does what God says and it gives the people water, this is the second account in Numbers 20<sup>1</sup> where he goes back to the rock. People are complaining, they just had a rebellion, the people were gonna rebel against him, his sister just died, the stresses of life started just bubbling up and you know what Moses does? Some of the commentaries even say this is a big question what happened at the rock, but at least a piece of it was is that Moses went from being humble and all of a sudden—just like verse 12 snaps on us—all of a sudden just blasphemy comes out of Moses' mouth and he puts himself on the level of God and he says, "You rebels, did we not

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers 20:10-13

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provide for you?" And he talks of "we" as though he and God and he doesn't actually give God the authority. Instead of the fear of the Lord being the beginning of wisdom, the pride in oneself—the interesting thing about this is that he didn't start off as proud, he started off as humble. And life circumstances building on him and all the problems and all the troubles—sound anything like today? All of a sudden things start coming to the surface, and all of a sudden Moses became the fool.

That's the big idea I'd like us to think about. You know, just in the crucible of life, life is hard. Life has been tense, more for some of us than others, but it's been a hard season that we've gone through. We're in a pandemic, you know, there's all these race issues that are going on—don't become the fool in the midst of it. Stay connected to the Lord. Keep your eyes on Him. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Awe of yourself, pride and self-centeredness, becoming the victim, making it be—like Moses, probably said, "How could you all do this *to me*? How can you still complain about being thirsty?" Which is silly they were thirsty, but how could you do this to me? And all of a sudden he was full of pride and he became the fool and actually never got to go into the Promised Land, that was the result. So if anything from Proverbs 26, sure, there's a lot of wisdom. There's a lot of wisdom that we could pull for interacting with others. Be gracious with others. People are hurting right now. People are frustrated, be gracious with them, don't get pulled in, don't get pulled in and add to it though, have wisdom, go to the Lord. Keep a short account. Let's keep our eyes on Lord today. Let's fear Him above all else, and let's be a wise people who love others and love Jesus. Let me pray for us all.

*Lord,*

*I thank You so much for this time in your Scriptures. It's just amazing, Lord, your Scripture is amazing. Thank You that we have your Scripture in our hands with its perspicuity and we can dive to its depths and it applies to our lives. Thank You, Jesus. Amen.*

## Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

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