

Studies in the Book of Proverbs by [John T Polk II](#)
For [The Fellowship Room](#)

(#179) The Proverbs of Solomon 26:4-5- The Contradiction of Fools

Proverbs 26:4-5:

Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.

“Do not answer a fool” and “answer a fool” seem to be a contradiction of terms, but they are not! These commands are detached from each other by separate and different purposes. A “fool” is everyone who:

- Rejects God’s Wisdom and lives wickedly ([Psalm 53:1](#));
- “Spreads slander” ([Proverbs 10:18](#));
- Does evil for fun ([Proverbs 10:23](#));
- “Troubles his own house” ([Proverbs 11:29](#));
- Thinks he is right, regardless of the Bible ([Proverbs 12:15](#));
- Never listens to his father ([Proverbs 15:5](#));
- Can’t have wisdom beaten into him ([Proverbs 17:10](#))!

“Do not answer a fool according to his folly” put in other terms would be “don’t get down on his level.” We must not accept a fool’s method of reasoning in a lame attempt to reply “lest you also be like him,” that is, we also become foolish! Jesus Christ is, of course, our example, “who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously” ([1 Peter 2:23](#)), and therefore so should Christians do ([1 Peter 3:8-9](#)). Moses answered rebels rebelliously:

It went ill with Moses on account of them; because they rebelled against His Spirit, so that he spoke rashly with his lips.
([Psalm 106:32-33](#); read [Numbers 20:1-13](#))

- (a) It does no good to argue the “age of the earth” to Evolutionists who continually make up “millions and billions” of years with absolutely NO proof, whatsoever! The issue is *whether* God Created, not *when*! (And He did! [Genesis 1:1](#); [Hebrews 11:3](#))
- (b) It is useless to argue the pain and suffering of women to those who cold-bloodedly murder babies by abortion. The weeping prophet, Elisha, predicted that the Syrians would “dash their children, and rip open their women with child” ([2 Kings 8:12](#)), which came true ([2 Kings 15:16](#)). The issue is respect for each human life because God made us ([Genesis 1:26-27](#); [Psalm 139:13-18](#)).



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(c) It is senseless to argue the bad effects of political policies to power-mad politicians who are determined to control every aspect of individual life! God delivered Israelites from slavery in Egypt ([Leviticus 26:13](#)), delivered them from oppression repeatedly ([Psalm 62:8-11](#); [2 Kings 13:1-9](#)), and Christians should “not become slaves of men” ([1 Corinthians 7:21-23](#)).

“Answer a fool according to his folly” when silence would be mistaken for proof that he is right! Zophar thought Job was wrong and asked:
“Should not the multitude of words be answered? And should a man full of talk be vindicated?” ([Job 11:2](#))

Truly there is “A time to keep silence, And a time to speak” ([Ecclesiastes 3:7](#)). When a possessed “slave girl” proclaimed the truthfulness of Paul, he “greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ And he came out that very hour” ([Acts 16:16-18](#)). When truth can be shown to be contradictory to error, Christians must speak!

Jesus said that the world hates Him “because I testify of it that its works are evil” ([John 7:7](#)). Compromising with false teachers of the Bible lets them think they also are true ([1 Timothy 4:1-7](#)); bargaining with kidnappers lets them think they have some leverage; making a deal with terrorists lets them think they have won! Jesus sent His disciples “out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves” ([Matthew 10:16](#)). No fool has a truthful answer against the Gospel of Jesus Christ which says:
He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. ([Mark 16:16](#))

