

Proverbs 20 v. 3 shows us another warning sign about fools – their quickness to quarrel. Think of someone you’ve observed who acts like this. Why do you think their quickness to quarrel is a good predictor of their folly?

Jesus warned: *‘Do not judge, or you will be judged’* (**Matthew 7 v. 1**). When we use the Proverbs about the fool to decide that this or that person is foolish, are we ignoring Jesus’ warning? Why or why not?

Look back over the Proverbs to see which of these characteristics remind you of yourself. Describe something you can do this week to guard yourself against foolish behaviour.

Something to do NOW OR LATER

Read Matthew 7 v. 1 – 6.

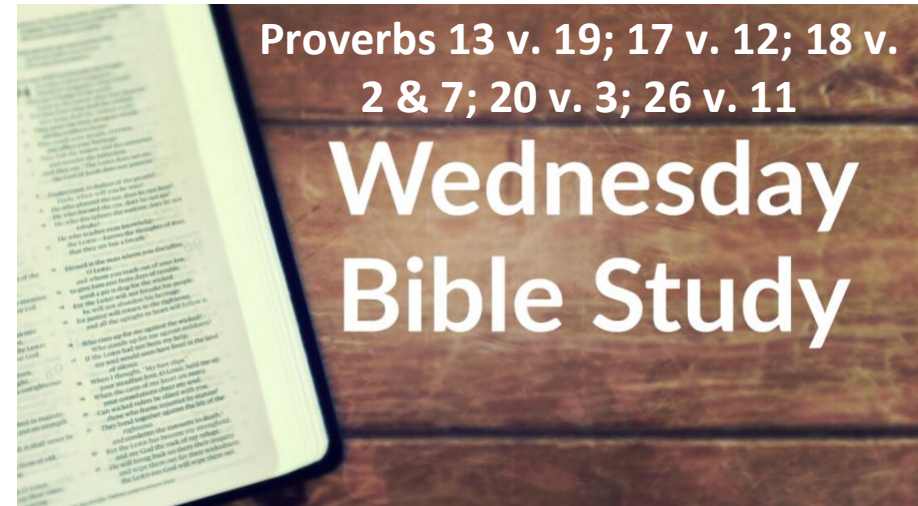
Jesus’ advice in verse 6 is similar to the advice Solomon gives us about foolish people. How is Jesus’ advice in verses 1 – 5 compatible with what he says in verse 6?

After his warning about judging others, Jesus said:

‘Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?’

Pray that you can follow Solomon’s advice about fools while heeding Jesus’ warning against pride.

Salendine Nook Baptist Church



For the purposes of our Bible Studies we will be using A Life Builder Bible Study. Our Theme for these studies is: **Proverbs (Learning To Live Wisely)**. The studies were originally written by William Mouser, but we will be modifying them in order that they become more usable for both home study and Church study.

These studies give us the opportunity to study the Bible in a greater depth and to reflect on what it is saying to us.

If you will be doing the studies from home, it is suggested that you do the study on a Wednesday morning, for an hour, starting at 10.30am. Get yourself a tea or coffee, a Bible, pen and paper (for any notes you want to make) and begin studying. Hope that you enjoy it!

Pastor Ian

CONTEXT: There are ‘how to’ books on virtually every activity under the sun. We can pick up or polish any number of new skills that contributes to success in our careers, relationships or finances. But one book of the Bible – **PROVERBS** – specialises in real wisdom for all of life. Understanding it will give us direction that is practical, godly and shrewd, and will bless us richly.

Some Thoughts To Help You While You Study

The purpose of the study is to develop the habit of 'defensive living' by avoiding dangerous folly we encounter daily.

Jesus didn't prohibit the application of the label fool to one who has earned it; rather he warns against an angry, scornful attitude which is comparable to murder.

A bear robbed of her cubs is an obvious danger, while fools may not seem dangerous when we first meet them. Within broad limits one knows what to expect of a bear robbed of her cubs and what to do to avoid her dangers. In the case of fools, we might not step away in time to avoid the calamity their folly brings.

The strong implication from **Proverbs 18 v. 2** is that the fool's opinions are riddled with misunderstanding. Insofar as fools insist on airing their opinions they display ignorance to those who know better. When fools act on their own opinions they reap the consequences.

At the heart of a fool is an obsessive self – esteem. They think so highly of themselves that others' opinions cannot have any merit. Consequently they are always talking, never listening. This behaviour is exactly opposite to how a wise person acts.

Without differences of viewpoint or agenda there can be no quarrel. The fool's quickness to quarrel arises from two factors – their contrariness to all that is sound, sane and sensible in the world around them, and their settled conviction that they are right and everyone else is wrong.

Here is some space for you to think these answers through. Why not make a note of your understanding:

STUDY 3 – AVOIDING THE FOOL

Proverbs 27 v. 22 makes one very clear point about fools – they're incorrigible: *'Though you grind a fool in a mortar, grinding him like grain with a pestle, you will not remove his folly from him'*. But if fools can't be reformed, why do we find such an abundance of Proverbs about them? The answer is simple – to help us recognise fools and their foolish behaviour, and to warn us about the consequences of both.

PERSONAL REFLECTION: *Fools have a powerful capacity to cause calamity, not only for themselves but for others as well. Our greatest danger from foolish people comes when we fail to recognise them (or their folly) until it is too late. Describe a situation you've seen where someone (or even yourself) is 'ambushed' by another person's folly. In hindsight, can you think of any warning signs that you missed, warnings that you're now more sensitive to?*

Scattered all through the Book of Proverbs are individual Proverbs which describe characteristics of the fool. Defensive driving techniques protect us from foolish drivers. The Proverbs in this study are some of those in Solomon's wisdom that equip us for 'defensive living'.

Read Proverbs 13 v. 19; 17 v. 12; 18 v. 2 & 7; 20 v. 3; 26 v. 11

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:

Try the 'thought experiment' suggested by **Proverbs 17 v. 12**. Imagine yourself walking in the forest. Now imagine that a rampaging mother bear, robbed of her cubs, comes crashing through the undergrowth. How do you think that situation is like meeting a fool in the midst of his folly?

Can you relate an episode from your own life or from the experience of someone you know where encountering a fool was similar to meeting a bear robbed of her cubs?

Proverbs 18 v. 2 tells us that fools are always ready with a viewpoint and ever eager to broadcast it. How would you expect a prudent or wise person to behave differently?

What does **Proverbs 18 v. 7** suggest might serve as a 'fool detector'?

How does **Proverbs 18 v. 2** explain why **Proverbs 18 v. 7** is true?

In **Proverbs 13 v. 19**, the second line would be better translated using the word **so** instead of **but**. What does this change of translation suggest about the fool?