

Shayla: Should I rebuke this fool?

Extended question:

I believe we are to defend the truth at all costs and let God defend us. I'm presently in an internet feud with someone who hates me. When I tried to get out to the conversation, he began to inveigh in a wicked, blasphemous manner against God. Should I refute those things even though it absolutely won't do anything for him?

Meforshim:

As much as possible, I'm going to allow Solomon (aka Quohemoth) to address this issue.

Avoid fights if possible. Avoiding a fight is a mark of honor; only fools insist on quarreling.¹

Carefully consider the consequences. You are wise to carefully consider the possible consequences of participating in this conversation. The wise look ahead to see what is coming; their caution allows them to avoid danger. Fools, on the other hand, deceive themselves and plunge ahead with great confidence.² A prudent person foresees the coming danger and takes precautions; while simpletons go blindly on and suffer the consequences.³

You need to remember that whoever walks with the wise will become wise; whoever walks with fools will suffer harm.⁴ It's like playing Russian roulette! You never know when disaster will strike them and if you are standing too close...

Conversations with fools aren't profitable. Generally speaking, one should avoid fools altogether for you certainly won't find knowledge there.⁵ Since one of the principle points of life is to learn, and you only have a limited amount of time to do it, why waste it on fools?

Fools aren't teachable. Fools have no interest in understanding; they only want to air their own opinion.⁶ If a wise person takes a fool to court, there will be ranting and ridicule but no satisfaction.⁷

Discretion is a life-giving fountain to those who possess it, but discipline is wasted on fools.⁸ As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.⁹ You cannot separate fools from their foolishness, even though you grind them like grain with mortar and pestle.¹⁰

Only God has any hope of breaking them of their foolishness and even He is doubtful. So generally speaking don't waste your breath on fools, for they will despise the wisest advice.¹¹

Fools will suffer natural consequences. One of the principle reasons people who should know better get involved in confrontations with fools and come out with scars is because of the urgent need to show them for the fools they are.¹² Relax, natural consequences are just around the bend. The mouths of fools are their ruin; their lips get them into trouble.¹³ They ruin their own lives by their foolishness and then have the temerity to be angry at the LORD!¹⁴ They get into constant quarrels and they're just asking for a beating.¹⁵ A

¹ Proverbs 20:3

² Proverbs 14:8, 16

³ Proverbs 22:3; 27:12

⁴ Proverbs 13:20

⁵ Proverbs 14:7

⁶ Proverbs 18:2

⁷ Proverbs 29:9

⁸ Proverbs 16:22

⁹ Proverbs 26:11

¹⁰ Proverbs 27:22

¹¹ Proverbs 23:9

¹² James 4:1

¹³ Proverbs 18:7

¹⁴ Proverbs 19:3

person who plans evil will get a reputation as a troublemaker. The schemes of a fool are sinful; everyone despises a mocker.¹⁶ They will soon be known for what they truly are. Step back and allow the natural consequences to take place. After all, it is pride that leads to arguments¹⁷ and God Himself resists the proud!¹⁸ Their ultimate punishment will be swift and sure.¹⁹

However, having said all this...

Fools do need to be publicly rebuked. The talk of fools is a rod for their backs but if there is any hope for them it will come from the words of the wise.²⁰ Quothleth has this very strange advice on the matter:

- **Proverbs 26:4-5 HCSB** Don't answer a fool according to his foolishness, or you'll be like him yourself. **(5)** Answer a fool according to his foolishness, or he'll become wise in his own eyes.

These two verses seems to contradict the each other, but Solomon was making a play upon the little word ki, here rendered "according to". In verse four it means "in harmony with". To enter into discussion with a fool within the terms of his folly is to lower oneself to his level and to accept his outlook upon life as one worthy of consideration. In verse five "according to" means "as it deserves". Answer a fool once or twice so that his foolishness is revealed to those who listen and to the fool himself. However, don't descend to his level and don't let him drag you into a never-ending, useless drain of time and effort. If you do he will actually pat himself on the back and think, "Look how important I am. Look how provocative I am. Everyone's focused on me!"

As the apostle Paul advise, don't get involved in arguing over unanswerable questions and controversial theological ideas; keep out of arguments and quarrels, for this kind of thing isn't worthwhile; it only does harm. Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning, knowing that such a person is perverted and sins, being self-condemned.²¹

¹⁵ Proverbs 18:6

¹⁶ Proverbs 24:8-9

¹⁷ Proverbs 13:10

¹⁸ James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5

¹⁹ 2 Peter 2:1, 3-9

²⁰ Proverbs 14:3

²¹ Titus 3:9-11