

## **Dr. August Konkell, Proverbs, Session 16, Living with Fools, Proverbs 26 Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

### **1. Abstract of Konkell, Proverbs, Session 16, Living with Fools, Proverbs 26, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

**Dr. August Konkell's lecture** analyzes Proverbs 26, focusing on the biblical concept of "fools." **Konkell differentiates** between types of foolishness, emphasizing that it's not about lack of intelligence but rather a lack of wisdom. He uses the contrasting approaches of Richard Dawkins and Alistair McGrath to illustrate how to engage with foolish arguments, suggesting that sometimes addressing folly directly is necessary, while other times it's better to simply expose the flaws in reasoning for a wider audience. **The lecture further explores** the various ways fools act, including their misuse of proverbs, their contentiousness, and their susceptibility to flattery. Finally, **Konkell concludes** by highlighting the dangers of foolish behavior, both for the fools themselves and for those around them.

**2. 20 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Konkell, Session 16 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Psalms & Wisdom → Proverbs).**



**Konkel\_Prov\_Session  
16.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Konkel, Proverbs, Session 16, Living with Fools, Proverbs 26

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from Dr. August Konkel's session on Proverbs 26, "Living with Fools."

#### Briefing Document: Proverbs 26 - Living with Fools

##### Overview:

This document summarizes Dr. August Konkel's lecture on Proverbs 26, a chapter heavily focused on the characteristics and behaviors of "fools." Konkel emphasizes that foolishness is not about a lack of intelligence or education, but rather a deficiency in wisdom, often manifesting in inappropriate and self-destructive actions. The lecture uses examples from the text and modern situations to illustrate the dangers of engaging with fools and the importance of discerning when and how to respond.

##### Key Themes and Ideas:

- **Defining the Fool:**
  - Proverbs uses multiple terms for "fool," ranging from the naive to the outright scoffer of wisdom.
  - Fools are not necessarily unintelligent or uneducated; they can be highly knowledgeable and yet lack wisdom. As Konkel states, *"They can be highly educated. They can be very intelligent. They can have a lot of knowledge, but they can still be very unwise."*
  - Even those in high positions can exhibit foolish behaviors.
- **Inappropriate Honor:**
  - Giving honor to a fool is inappropriate, like "snow in summer or rain at harvest" (Proverbs 26:1, implied).
  - This highlights the idea that some things are simply out of place or wrong in their context.
- **The Challenge of Responding to Fools:**
  - Proverbs 26:4-5 presents a seeming contradiction:
  - "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself." (Proverbs 26:4)

- "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes." (Proverbs 26:5)
- Konkel interprets this as needing discernment on when to engage and how.
- **The McGrath/Dawkins Example:**
- Konkel uses the example of Alistair McGrath and Richard Dawkins to illustrate the paradoxical proverbs.
- McGrath *didn't* directly debate Dawkins to change his mind, illustrating "Do not answer a fool according to his folly."
- McGrath did publicly critique Dawkins' arguments, which was "answering the fool according to his folly" for the sake of the audience who needed to hear it.
- This highlights that engaging may be necessary at times to point out fallacies, not to directly change the fool's mind. *"He answered the fool according to his folly because he pointed out to an audience that needed to know what all was wrong with Dawkins' argument."*
- **Characteristics of Fools (as highlighted in Proverbs 26):**
- **Repetitive Stupidity:** Fools tend to repeat their errors and poor choices.
- **Presumptuous:** They operate on flawed assumptions and have an inflated view of their own wisdom.
- **Dangerous Messengers:** Sending a fool with a message is detrimental and self-destructive. *"you send a message with a fool, you're cutting off your own feet."*
- **Misuse of Wisdom:** Even proverbs can be harmful when used inappropriately by fools. *"Proverbs can be very dangerous in the mouth of a fool because they use them in ways that are totally inappropriate."*
- **Slothfulness:** Fools often avoid responsibility and make excuses for their inaction. Konkel notes the sluggard might think they are smart, while being completely inactive.
- **Contentious:** Fools involve themselves in disputes and quarrels unnecessarily.
- **Deceptive:** They fail to understand the power of deceit and the harm it causes.
- **Fraudulent:** They may be deceptive even with friends.

- **Flatterers:** Fools use flattery to manipulate others, making it difficult to discern genuine intent. Konkel: *"You know, I always find it difficult to know how to take compliments because I'm often not quite sure if someone is just being nice because they feel that they need to or if someone is saying something that they really believe to be true."*
- **Hypocrisy:** They may conceal hatred with deceit, highlighting the mismatch between words and actions. *"In the end, liars actually hate those that they abuse."*
- **The Power of Speech:**
  - Speech can be used for great good, but also for great harm by fools. *"So we do need to remember that speech and talk are not always what it seems to be."*
  - Fools are very clever at using speech in ways that are a detriment to everyone, but especially themselves.
- **Personal Reflection:**
  - The chapter is not just about identifying others but recognizing our own potential for foolish behavior. *"And unfortunately, there are tendencies we can all have."*

#### Key Quotes:

- *"They can be highly educated. They can be very intelligent. They can have a lot of knowledge, but they can still be very unwise."*
- *"He answered the fool according to his folly because he pointed out to an audience that needed to know what all was wrong with Dawkins' argument."*
- *"you send a message with a fool, you're cutting off your own feet."*
- *"Proverbs can be very dangerous in the mouth of a fool because they use them in ways that are totally inappropriate."*
- *"You know, I always find it difficult to know how to take compliments because I'm often not quite sure if someone is just being nice because they feel that they need to or if someone is saying something that they really believe to be true."*
- *"In the end, liars actually hate those that they abuse."*
- *"So we do need to remember that speech and talk are not always what it seems to be."*

- *"And unfortunately, there are tendencies we can all have."*

**Conclusion:**

Dr. Konkel's lecture on Proverbs 26 underscores the importance of recognizing the various manifestations of foolishness. The chapter provides a framework for understanding the actions of fools, the dangers of engaging with them unwisely, and the need for discernment in our responses. It also encourages self-reflection and the awareness of our own potential for foolish behaviors. The key takeaway is that true wisdom involves not just intelligence or knowledge, but a proper understanding of our own limitations and the appropriate ways to live and interact with others.

## 4. Study Guide: Konkel, Proverbs, Session 16, Living with Fools, Proverbs 26

### Proverbs 26: Living with Fools - Study Guide

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to Konkel, what is the primary issue with fools?
2. How does Proverbs 26:1 describe the inappropriateness of giving honor to a fool?
3. What is the apparent contradiction between Proverbs 26:4 and 26:5?
4. How did Alistair McGrath address Richard Dawkins' arguments, according to Konkel?
5. Why did the student in McGrath's lecture become furious?
6. In what way are proverbs dangerous in the mouth of a fool?
7. Describe how the proverb characterizes the sluggard.
8. What does the text say about a fool's involvement in quarrels?
9. Why does the text warn against flattery?
10. What is the ultimate consequence for liars, as described in the passage?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. According to Konkel, the primary issue with fools is not a lack of education, intelligence, or knowledge, but rather their unwise actions and decisions, which can persist despite their capabilities. They can have knowledge but act in ways that are harmful to themselves and others.
2. Proverbs 26:1 describes giving honor to a fool as being inappropriate, comparing it to snow in summer or rain during harvest, which are both out of place and disruptive. This suggests that honoring a fool is an unnatural and unproductive act.
3. The apparent contradiction is that verse 4 advises against answering a fool according to their folly to avoid becoming like them, while verse 5 advises answering a fool according to their folly to prevent them from becoming wise in

their own eyes. This highlights the complexity of dealing with fools, requiring discernment in how to respond.

4. Konkel explains that McGrath did not directly debate Dawkins, but instead critiqued Dawkins' underlying assumptions and exposed the absurdity of his arguments to an audience, effectively undermining his credibility rather than engaging in a fruitless argument.
5. The student became furious because McGrath's lecture undermined the foundation of what he had believed, leading to a feeling of betrayal and anger rather than immediately embracing new ideas, and revealed the flaws in the arguments that supported those beliefs.
6. Proverbs can be dangerous in the mouth of a fool because they can misuse and misapply the proverbs, using them inappropriately and causing more harm than good, lacking understanding of the depth of wisdom contained within them.
7. The proverb characterizes the sluggard as someone who is lazy, making excuses to avoid responsibility, and inactive to the point of not even feeding themselves, while perhaps thinking of themselves as intelligent.
8. The text says that fools are contentious, getting involved in the quarrels and conflicts of others where they don't belong and where they have no business, and escalating those situations, indicating their disruptive and unwise nature.
9. The text warns against flattery because it can be deceptive, masking true intentions, and used to manipulate others. Flattery can be given insincerely to manipulate and receive something desired in return.
10. According to the passage, the ultimate consequence for liars is that they actually hate those they abuse, highlighting the destructive nature of their deceit and the internal conflict it creates.

## Essay Questions

**Instructions:** Choose one of the following questions and write an essay response using evidence from the provided text.

1. Explore the tension between Proverbs 26:4 and 26:5. How does Konkel use the example of Richard Dawkins and Alistair McGrath to illustrate this tension, and what implications does this have for our interactions with those who hold foolish views?
2. How does the passage describe the dangers of "the fool"? Discuss the specific character traits of a fool that are presented in the text and the potential harm associated with those traits.
3. Analyze the role of speech, both flattery and deceit, in the context of Proverbs 26. How does the passage caution us about the power of language and how it can be used by both fools and those who seek to manipulate?
4. Konkel explains that the issue with the "fool" is not a lack of intelligence, knowledge, or education. What is it then, according to the text, that separates the wise from the fool? Use examples from the source text to support your answer.
5. Considering the descriptions of the fool in Proverbs 26, how might these descriptions challenge or affirm our own self-perceptions and behaviors? Discuss the potential for self-reflection and growth based on this text.



## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Fool:** In the context of Proverbs 26, a fool is not necessarily someone lacking intelligence or knowledge, but someone who acts unwisely, making poor choices and often engaging in harmful or destructive behaviors.
- **Folly:** Actions or behaviors that demonstrate a lack of wisdom, good judgment, or understanding. It is often associated with the actions of a fool.
- **Scoffers:** People who mock or ridicule wisdom, knowledge, or truth. They have contempt for those who are wise.
- **Sluggard:** A person who is lazy and avoids work or responsibility. This is a specific type of fool highlighted in Proverbs 26.
- **Coercion:** The act of using force, threats, or other forms of pressure to compel someone to do something. The text argues that coercion is ineffective at changing people.
- **Flattery:** Excessive and often insincere praise given to gain favor or manipulate others.
- **Deceit:** The act of misleading or misrepresenting the truth, often for personal gain or to manipulate others.
- **Proverbs:** Short, wise sayings that offer guidance on how to live a good life. In the context of the text, they also can be used to illustrate the behavior of a fool and are also subject to misinterpretation.
- **Presumptions:** Assuming facts without having proof or a strong reason for believing the assumption.
- **Contentious:** Prone to arguing or fighting; quarrelsome. Fools are described as contentious people who get involved in situations where they don't belong.

## 5. FAQs on Konkel, Proverbs, Session 16, Living with Fools, Proverbs 26, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions on Living with Fools from Proverbs 26

1. **How does the book of Proverbs define a "fool," and is it simply about a lack of intelligence?** The book of Proverbs uses various terms for "fool," ranging from someone naive to a complete scoffer of wisdom. Importantly, it is emphasized that a fool isn't necessarily someone lacking education, knowledge, or intelligence. A fool can be highly educated and intelligent but still behave unwisely, making poor decisions and engaging in harmful actions. The core issue is a rejection of wisdom and a propensity to act against it.
2. **Proverbs 26:4-5 seems contradictory: "Do not answer a fool according to his folly..." and "Answer a fool according to his folly..." How can this be understood and applied?** These verses highlight the nuanced approach needed when dealing with a fool. The first verse warns against engaging a fool on their own terms, as you risk being drawn into their foolishness. The second verse suggests that sometimes it is necessary to point out the flaws in a fool's thinking, not to change their mind directly but to expose their folly to others. This illustrates that there is a time for silence and a time for strategic response. The example given was how Alistair McGrath didn't engage directly with Richard Dawkins but exposed the fallacies in Dawkins' reasoning to the public.
3. **What are some key characteristics of a fool, according to Proverbs 26?** Proverbs 26 illustrates several characteristics of a fool: they repeat their stupidities, are presumptuous, and can be dangerous messengers. They misuse wisdom, are prone to laziness and making excuses, and are contentious, getting involved in matters that do not concern them. They do not understand the deadly power of deceit, engage in slander, and often use flattery deceptively, indicating a general lack of integrity and discernment.
4. **Why does the proverb emphasize that giving honor to a fool is inappropriate?** Giving honor to a fool is likened to something inappropriate like snow or rain during harvest, a disruption of the natural order. Such inappropriate honor empowers and elevates someone who lacks wisdom or sound judgment, which creates more opportunities for them to do harm, either to themselves or others, further disrupting order.

5. **How does Proverbs 26 address the danger of a fool's speech?** Proverbs 26 highlights the dangers of a fool's speech in multiple ways. It notes how fools can misuse proverbs or wise sayings, applying them inappropriately and causing harm. It also notes how they engage in deceitful flattery to manipulate others, as well as spreading slander and complaints, often causing conflict and discord. These examples emphasize the misuse of speech can cause harm and chaos.
6. **What does the text say about how fools treat others, especially those they dislike?** The text points out that fools who use deceitful speech to manipulate or flatter others often harbor hidden hatred for those they abuse. This indicates a lack of genuine care and an exploitive mindset. This duality also suggests a deeper level of foolishness rooted in deception and manipulation, which ultimately harms the deceiver.
7. **How can we recognize tendencies of foolishness in ourselves, and how does the passage encourage us to address this?** The text suggests that we all have tendencies to engage in foolish behaviors, such as making excuses, being lazy, engaging in slander or deceit, and misusing wisdom. By acknowledging this, we are encouraged to evaluate our own actions and be mindful of how we engage with others. Recognizing our own potential for foolishness can help us to approach others with more wisdom and humility.
8. **Beyond controlling a fool's actions, is there any other effective strategy that is implied?** The text suggests that control is limited in its ability to change someone. In some cases, as seen in the discussion of the Richard Dawkins / Alistair McGrath situation, you can address the underlying folly to an audience who can be affected by it. However, a person who is behaving foolishly often may not change their own mind. Thus, the more effective strategy appears to be in discerning if it's time to disengage, to address the issue broadly to a relevant audience, or to not engage.