

## Dealing with Difficult People

Wise Up, *Proverbs 26*

### Introduction

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- What problems do missionaries face? For what things do they need prayer? Several years ago, a survey was done of 55 North American Protestant mission agencies with more than 100 staff members overseas. The missionaries listed the following problems, in ranked from least to greatest:
  - Loneliness & Financial pressures
  - Marriage difficulties & Managing general stress
  - Raising children & Cultural adjustments
  - The top problem: relationships with other missionaries
- It seems that even spiritually mature & gifted men & women who serve on the foreign mission field have to deal with difficult people – and sometimes that difficult person is another missionary!
- What hope do any of the rest of us have in coping with the hostile, complaining, unresponsive, super-agreeable, negative, know-it-all, indecisive people in our workplaces, neighborhoods, and homes?
- Proverbs 26 contains a portrait of 4 different kinds of difficult people.
  - The fool is a recurring character throughout book of Proverbs.
  - The fool is joined by the lazybones, the agitator, and the liar.
- These are 4 personalities that you will likely encounter on your journey towards living a wise life before God.
  - They are mentioned for informational purposes, but also as a warning.
  - **You must deal with difficult people accordingly, or you may become one yourself. (read verse 1-2)**
- After we look at each of the 4 difficult people in more detail, I will suggest some ways to deal with them from a gospel perspective.

### Body

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#### I. A fool refuses to learn from their mistakes (v. 1-12)

- A. How many in this room make mistakes? Watching the livestream?
- B. The key to spotting a fool is found in verses 11-12.
  1. Vomit is something that you should clearly leave alone, but...
  2. The stereotypical fool is so sure of the facts, they refuse to listen.
- C. Also notice:
  1. A fool resists correction (v. 3-5).
  2. A fool cannot be trusted (v. 6-10).
    - a. They don't know how to handle truth (v. 7, 9)
    - b. They hurt & embarrass everyone around them (v. 6, 10).
    - c. A "fool's errand" is a task/activity that has no hope of success.

#### II. A lazybones works hard at not working at all (v. 13-16).

- A. Did lions exist in ancient Israel?
  1. Yes, Asiatic lions did exist, but you wouldn't see 1 every day.

2. The picture here is of someone who always has an outrageous excuse for not getting things done.

- B. The lazybones is always resting, but rarely working.
- C. The lazybones has a BIG appetite, but a small follow through.
- D. The would-be employee: "The little bit of work I'd do won't even be noticed!"

#### III. An agitator stirs up trouble for their own entertainment (v. 17-22).

- A. What do you call the post in the middle of your washing machine basket? An agitator and for good reason
- B. Dog like to be petted, but not grabbed by the ears. Doing so, is to get bitten for no good reason (v. 17).
- C. When the agitator is caught, he claims he was "just joking." (19)
- D. Some conflicts will die down on their own until, until the agitator puts more wood on the fire (v. 20-21).
- E. One of the agitator's most effective tools is gossip (v. 22).

#### IV. A liar deceives others to cover over the ugliness in their heart (v. 23-28).

- A. This portrait is about why, not how liars lie (v. 23-25)
  1. Like a smooth & shiny glaze coving a clay pot, the deceptive words of a liar cover up wickedness, hate, and "other abominations."
  2. Liars are particularly hard to deal with because they are intentionally deceptive and dishonest.
- B. The good things about lying is that it can't go on forever (v. 26-28)
  1. Eventually, the truth comes out, either on earth or in heaven.
  2. Liars set traps for others that backfire onto themselves.

### Conclusion

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- **You must deal with difficult people accordingly, or you may become one yourself.**
  - This is not an opportunity to label people unfairly or write them off.
  - There are, however, repeated warnings here about trusting in or associating too closely with a difficult person (v. 6, 10, 18, 25).
  - This is a big deal because pride, laziness, gossip, & lying are all sin.
- **Here are 4 ways to deal with one of these difficult people**
  - Look for a pattern (has this behavior happened before? v. 11)
  - Remember the gospel ("...that I may by all means save some." 1 Co. 9:22).
  - Speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15)
  - Reject fear ("The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted." Pro 29:25)
- Like "Christian," the main character in Pilgrim's Progress, you will encounter many different people on your way from "City of Destruction" to the "Celestial City." Some will make your journey easier, and some will make it more difficult.
  - Keep your eyes on the gospel of Jesus Christ
  - Keep your eyes open for difficult people