



[2 Corinthians 12:11-13](#)

(11) I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. (12) Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. (13) For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

King James Version

The apostle Paul, despite his cautions to Timothy (see [II Timothy 2:23](#); [I Timothy 6:3-5](#)), realized at one point that if he did not challenge the foolish challenges of his enemies (concerning his apostolic authority and methods), naïve members of the Corinthian congregation might believe them. His lengthy answer spans II Corinthians 11 and 12.

Obviously, Paul felt extremely uncomfortable about answering these allegations, as is evidenced by his self-effacing reference to himself as a fool, but he also realized that his silence would have tacitly endorsed the charges. Likewise, our Savior, when confronted about His identity and credentials, knew the timing was right to put the gainsaying Pharisees in their place ([John 8:52-58](#)).

As one minister said, "If you are going to preach a warning message, you had better be mindful of your exit strategies, or be prepared to die on that hill of battle." There certainly are times when diplomacy fails and silence is no longer appropriate. Our society is replete with foolish teachings, ideas, theories, and misconceptions—both secular and religious—and under the right circumstances, they should be confronted and shown to be false, lest they be accepted as factual.

As maturing Christians, we must learn to discern when it is proper to answer a fool *according to* his folly (in the manner his foolishness deserves), and when it is a bad idea to answer a fool according to his *folly* (lowering ourselves to his undignified level). The right exercise of [God's Spirit](#) in us, which Paul calls "the mind of [Christ](#)" ([I Corinthians 2:16](#)), provides the potential to have and use this ability.

— David F. Maas

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[To Answer a Fool—or Not](#)

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