

The Chapel Ministry



CLEARCREEK
CHAPEL

Practical Wisdom from Proverbs

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Savoring the Supremacy of God
Studying the Word of God
Shaping the People of God
Spreading the Gospel of God

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Practical Wisdom for Interpersonal Communication

By Devon Berry

Introduction This Sunday evening we begin what will be at least a four-part series from the book of Proverbs. Over the next month, we will be covering the topics of communication, anger, relationships, and folly as they are addressed in the book of Proverbs.

Before we begin talking about communication this evening, I would like to spend a little bit of time thinking about the *book* of Proverbs and its relevance for today. I thought it might be interesting to listen to a number of what are considered “modern proverbs” on the topic of communication.

Let’s take a quick listen to what “modern proverbs” have to say on the topic of communication:

- **Give every man thy ear but few thy voice – William Shakespeare**
- **I don’t let my mouth say nothin’ my head can’t stand – Louis Armstrong**
- **I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never listen – Ernest Hemingway**
- **I remind myself every morning: Nothing I say this day will teach me anything. So if I’m going to learn, I must do it by listening – Larry King**
- **If you have nothing to say, say nothing – Mark Twain**
- **Electric communications will never substitute for the face of someone who with their soul encourages another person to be brave and true – Charles Dickens**
- **English is the perfect language for preachers because it allows you to talk until you think of what to say – Garrison Keillor**
- **Kind words can be short and easy to speak but their echoes are truly endless – Mother Teresa**
- **The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightening and the lightening bug – Mark Twain**
- **Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind – Rudyard Kipling**

You may find that there are actually some rather wise words about communication here in these modern day proverbs. You may even note that there are some common characteristics among them: They are short. They are pithy (brief yet forceful and to the point, often with an element of wit). They vividly communicate general truths in a memorable way. These proverbs also have “popular currency,” that is, most people would agree with these statements regardless of their religious persuasion. So are there any differences between what we read here and what we find in the book of Proverbs in the Bible? Or are the Proverbs of the Bible on par with the proverbs of

modern men? This question is important in and of itself, but it becomes even more important when we consider that if we don't understand the biblical (or Hebrew) idea of a Proverb, we may be mistaken and disappointed when we try to utilize our contemporary idea of a proverb when we approach the Proverbs in the Bible. So let's take just a few minutes to get a few of the basics about Proverbs under our belt so that we might better understand, interpret, and apply them. However, let me warn you that the few questions we answer here about the book as a whole, are barely adequate to even begin to communicate the simplicity, beauty, complexity, and profoundness of this book

Introduction to Series on Proverbs

What is a Proverb?

The Proverbs are a form of Israel's wisdom literature, which includes other books such as Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. Wisdom literature was written in two forms, poetry and prose. Proverbs happens to be a book of poetry, an important point to keep in mind as we read. More specifically, the Proverbs were NOT written for "popular currency" but rather for those who *fear the Lord*. Consider Proverbs 8:8-9, "All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them. They are all straight to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge." But what about those who are not righteous? Proverbs 26:7 reads, "Like a lame man's legs, which hang useless, is a proverb in the mouth of fools." Therefore, the proverbs of the Bible may have little appeal to the world. The word Proverbs itself, means "to be like." One aspect of this meaning is the constant call throughout Proverbs for the reader to see what it is "to be like" the wise person, or "to be like" the fool, this should naturally compel the reader to form a judgment of his or herself.

Why are Proverbs so different than the rest of the Bible?

There are some who would go as far as to say that the Book of Proverbs was written by the wise men of Israel to try and "fit" their culture into those of the people groups around them and that the Proverbs do not, therefore, fit very well into the Bible. Is this so? Consider the following facts:

- Proverbs consistently calls the reader to the fear of the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:5, Joshua 24:14, Proverbs 1:7, Isaiah 29:13); Proverbs complements and does not contradict the theology of Moses and the prophets; Proverbs ascribes the same attributes and actions to God as Moses and prophets.
- Expresses enduring and eternal truths, certified by the Holy Spirit's inclusion of it in the Canon of Scripture, and is repeatedly referenced in the New Testament (consider esp. Hebrews 12:5-6 and Proverbs 3:11-12 where the Church is addressed as the son).

So, while the Proverbs may sound and feel a bit different than the rest of Scripture, we must as heartily endorse this book as being God-breathed and useful for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17) as all other books of the Bible. Proverbs are not simply short, pithy, statements

which have popular appeal – rather, they are the declared Word of God, able to impart life to man.

Lastly, let's ask ourselves how the Proverbs fit into the rest of Scripture.

How do Proverbs “fit in” to the redemptive-historical flow of Scripture?

Can you answer the following questions? What does Proverbs have to do with Adam and a horse? What part of the biblical narrative do the Proverbs supply? Are they simply neat but true sayings that help us live better before God? Are the themes common to all of Scripture found in the Proverbs too? Are the Proverbs Christocentric? Who or what is Lady wisdom? And what about this father and the lectures he delivered to his son? When were the Proverbs written and how did they fit into the historical storyline of Israel? Do the Proverbs have anything to say about the redemption of man? What is the connection between the books of Wisdom and the gospel? Do the Proverbs really have anything to do with my life today since I do have the New Testament which has a lot to say about practical living? What does Ecclesiastes and Oprah have in common?

All of these questions certainly cannot be answered this evening – if ever at all! If you really want to dig deep into the Wisdom literature of Scripture and learn to understand them well – you'll need to go somewhere else...that's right, somewhere else. Where?, To Adult Sunday School in the fall where we will be taking a more in-depth study approach to Proverbs and Ecclesiastes when we consider Christ, our Wisdom for living. Our study will consider Christ as the Wisdom of God himself and how we incarnate Christ in becoming wise decision makers.

For tonight, let's simply make one connection: Turn to 1 Corinthians 1: 24, 30. We see that Christ is the wisdom of God. In Proverbs 1:1-4, we see that the purpose of the book is to know wisdom and instruction. So, may knowing Christ have something to do with knowing Proverbs? I assure you it does, but I leave it to others to draw that truth further out.

So we see that the Proverbs are indeed Scripture and are therefore important for our understanding and growth. We also see that the Proverbs are written in a manner that “shows us” what it is “to be like...” the wise person or the foolish person. Lastly, I hinted that Proverbs may well inform and be informed by our reading of the rest of Scripture, even as that pertains to the person of Christ. With all this said, let's transition to discussing the topic of communication in the Proverbs.

Proverbs on Communication

Introduction

Beth and I have been part of an engaged couples mentoring program for a number of years. This program is a combination of classroom-like training sessions and more informal meetings between the young couples and their supposedly wiser and more experienced mentor couple! While we are relatively new at the marriage effort ourselves, we do our best, and have seen many couples benefit

from the program. A number of the couples we have mentored have become personal friends.

At least one of the training sessions has traditionally focused on communication. And the introduction is usually along the lines of, “One of the biggest problems in any marriage is communication...” Many good words of advice are given for communicating in a manner that enhances and enriches marital harmony, thought provoking examples are often shared, and tips on how to “fight fair” are even supplied. The focus is on communication techniques and improving your marriage.

Beth and I have come away from this particular session encouraged by the good and wise advice that is often provided to these young and aspiring couples...however...we’ve also come away with the sense that something is missing or that something has been mis-focused...call it the “Clearcreek curse.” Now if we were in the classroom I would pester you with questions and relentlessly goad you toward discovering what it was that bothered us – but we’re not in the classroom and many of you may already have a good idea of where I am going to head in my next few sentences. The main difficulty we identified, among what were many good and wise words, was the absence of a recognition of *where* “communication” comes from. What is its source? Its wellspring? Consequently, by failing to recognize that communication is not simply a source-less neutral expression, originating in our brains and mouths, for the purpose of sending and receiving messages, one is left with the sense that communication itself is somehow a technique to be mastered for the achieving of marital bliss versus an expression of the heart characterized by foolishness or wisdom, sin or obedience, a desire to please God or a willingness to rebel against God.

The Source of Communication and the SOURCE of Communication

So what is communication if not a technique? Where does it come from? It is my contention, and I believe the Scriptures as well, that **communication is nothing more than an extension of *who we are in a manner accessible to others***. Although it may take on many forms, literature, non-verbal movement, all forms of media, etcetera, it is **most often in the form of speech**. And on speech is where the authors of the Proverbs spend most of their time when addressing communication. Let’s consider a few passages that begin to establish this idea for us:

The Source of Communication

The close knit relationship that the Scriptures portray between one’s heart and their speech is evidenced throughout all of Scripture. The easiest way to see this for yourself is to do a search on your Bible software for the words heart and speech or heart and words or heart and lips, and you will begin to see how frequently what we say is connected by the Scripture to who we are. Similarly, you will also note the connection between what is said, and how it shapes who we are.

Consider Proverbs 4:20 – 27. Here we can note that healing and life-giving words can be “kept” (v.21) in a heart. What does it mean to be “keep” words

in a heart? Simply that we dwell upon the words, that we allow the words to penetrate us deeply, or perhaps, most simply, that we *believe* what the words say.

Also note Proverbs 15:20 and 16:23 (Read). And then come to the New Testament with me to see this even more clearly in Matthew 12:33 – 37. Not only do words go into a heart, but words come out of a heart and evidence what is in it.

Be clear that the Scriptures do not allow for a separation between what we listen to (or keep/store up in our heart), what we say, and what is in our heart. Your words betray you, whether they are words said in the quietness of your own mind or heart (communicating to yourself) or aloud (communicating to others) In health care, a good diagnostician will rarely put eyes on the actual source of a disease or disorder, but he or she will quite often draw the right conclusion about what the diagnosis is by studying the symptoms. Our words are often symptoms that point to the diagnosis of our heart – full of good treasure or full of evil treasure. (see also: Matthew 15:10-20).

The SOURCE of Communication

But we are not unique in this use of words to communicate what is in our heart. In fact, it reflects just one more way in which we are created in the image of God. God has chosen to use words as His primary form of communication to man, and thereby establishes the importance of words for the purpose of communication.

In Genesis 8:21 shortly after the flood, Noah builds an altar to the Lord. When Noah offered up his burnt offering, the Lord was pleased by the aroma and *said, in his heart*, “I will never again curse the ground because of man...” Early in Genesis, the power of words is demonstrated as a sovereign God speaks by divine fiat and what we know as the material world comes into existence. And God said, “Let their be light,” and there was light (Genesis 1:3).

Further, God expects us to take His words into our heart, just as the father in Proverbs urges his son to “keep his instruction” in his heart. In Deuteronomy God repeatedly, through the preacher Moses, tells the Israelites to “take,” “lay up,” to allow to be “on”, in and upon their hearts His words (6:6, 11:18, 32:46).

And I must briefly point you forward to the most potent example of God using “the Word” to communicate. John in the New Testament tells us that Christ, in the incarnation, became the living Word (John 1). God has communicated most potently in Christ, the Word (Logos) of God, made flesh. Although we carry the Gospel message in the form of words today (Romans 10:14-15) today, we call people to Christ, the Word in the flesh, for it is through Him, this Word from God, that man’s greatest need is met. When the Proverbs speak of words giving life – at least in one respect, they point us directly to Christ, the True Life-giver.

So the Scriptures continually links these ideas of words and heart together. Words come out of our heart and words go into our heart. They are both an expression and a influencer of hearts. This basic concept is key. No amount of tips & tricks for improving communication will enable us to better please God until we understand that our speech cannot be disentangled from the beliefs and desires of our hearts. Words are the expression of God's heart

The Value of Wise Communication

Although it should be growing clear that words are a powerful force in life, let's look at a few Proverbs that will impress upon our minds how powerful they are – for both good and evil.

First, Proverbs tells us that words can impart life and death. While this is true in an eternal sense, we are also caused to see this in a temporal sense: Proverbs 18:20-21, 10:11 <Read>. Need an example? See v.12. (see also: 10:19-21, 11:30, 13:14)

Second, Proverbs tell us that words can heal and destroy. Consider these several passages with me <Read> Proverbs 11:8-10, 12:18, 16:24. These verses make it clear that our words, both their content and the manner of delivery, can profoundly effect and influence those around us. Do you view your words as merely impotent sounds which pass information along? Or do you view them as daggers, swords, salves, medicines? (see also: 10:8-14 [esp. 14])

Third, Proverbs makes clear that words can reward or damage oneself. Let's look into a few more passages <Read> 6:12-15;, 12:13-14, 18:2-7 (esp. 6-7). You yourself will be effected by what you say. It is not only that others can be given life or death, healing or injury, it is also that *you* will be rewarded or damaged by your own words. Many of us speak sinfully at times and regret the damage we do to others. Do we realize that with our words we invite consequences, lay traps for ourselves, and invite fights and quarrels. This is probably nowhere more easily seen than within the family unit. Consider words and their effects in the parent-child, husband-wife, and sibling-sibling, interaction. One commentator has noted that, sticks and stones may break the bones, but names will never hurt you is not true for what is done to you is of little account besides what is done in you (Kidner).

Words are powerful. What you say *will* effect both you and those around you. To think otherwise is foolishness. Each one of us, therefore, is accountable for our words – ALL OF OUR WORDS – those spoken (spoken) and those thought (said in the heart). If we truly regarded our tongue as James describes it (James 3) a bit, a rudder, a fire, we would walk around as if we were in a very dry forest carrying a lit torch extended out in front of us. And in this forest are people who are cold and in need of having their campfires lit for warmth, protection, and comfort – but it is a dry forest, and a misplacement of our torch, or use of the torch with evil intent, can set the whole forest ablaze, bringing harm and death to all within, ourselves included.

Understanding the power of speech, is just the beginning to understanding all the Proverbs has to say about communication. As we move toward concluding, let us

briefly consider several characteristics of the communication of the wise and the communication of the foolish.

The Characteristics of Wise Communication

In its most basic form, the process of communication can be broken down into two parts, sending messages and receiving messages. Proverbs uses many words to capture these two ideas. What we *say* is often indicated by words such as “speech,” “mouth,” “lips,” “tongue,” “words,” or “speaks.” How we *listen* is often indicated by words such as “hears,” “listen,” “receive,” “be attentive,” “keep,” “apply,” and “ear.” Whenever you read words like these in Proverbs, know that you are being cued to think about communication. We can get a limited overview of these the characteristics of the wise and foolish by arranging them in a table:

	Wise/Righteous	Foolish/Evil
Speaks	Gentle (15:1) Commends knowledge (15:2) Boasts not (27:1-2) Restrained (10:19, 17:14, 27, 28) No Gossip (11:12-13) Right timing, right way (25:11-12) Thoughtful (15:28, 18:13) Honest (8:7, 12:17, 19, 22) Wisely reproves (25:12, 24:25-26) Graciously (22:11-12)	Harsh (15:1) Pours out folly (15:2) Exalts self (30:32) Speaks hastily (29:20) Flatters (28:23, 29:5) Deceitful (26:20-28, 20:17) Lies to prosper (21:16, 19:9) Slanders (20:19) Mocks justice (19:28) Crooked, without integrity (19:1) Causes fights (18:6-8)
Listens	Listens and accepts the words/instruction of the wise (22:17-19, 19:20) Hears, heeds reproof (1:23, 13:18) Hears advise (12:15) Seeks knowledge (18:15)	Ignores, despises, hates reproof (1:25, 12:1, 15:5, 13:1) Listens to the wicked and liars (17:4) Does not listen to advice, instruction (12:15, 19:27)

**This table is not exhaustive*

Observations & Applications

So what applications and observations can be drawn from the material presented this evening?

1. Teach your youth Proverbs. One of the main purposes of Proverbs is to give knowledge and discretion to the youth (Proverbs 1). Hopefully in listening this evening you have already sensed the value of Proverbs for this purpose. Your children are naturally prone toward the right column (foolishness and evil). Proverbs is designed to call them left. Use them for such a purpose.
2. Evaluate your communication. Communication issues forth from the heart, is powerful, and can be differentiated as being wise and righteous or foolish and evil. Within the family unit is an ideal place to see these truths played out. Consider this exercise after the next major parent-child, sibling-sibling, or dare I say, spouse-spouse argument. Sit down and write

out what was said, word for word. Then ask, what was in my heart when I said this? In what way did the power of these words influence their audience, influence me? Were my words wise/righteous or foolish/evil? For extra insight, write out what you were saying in your heart/mind but not voicing.

3. Through the mouth, you can see the heart. Proverbs is helpful because often the meaning is very accessible – this wise will be this way, the foolish will be this way. As water reflects a man’s face, so a man’s heart reflects the man, for instance. Do not divorce what you say from who you are. If you often say nasty, evil, hurtful, divisive, and false things, your heart is foolish and evil and you must repent and perhaps be saved. Likewise, if your communication is characterized by the truth, is gracious, speaks against evil, refrains from gossip and slander, listens to and heeds advice, then there is the fruit of righteousness in your life. Continue to grow in wisdom.
4. Christ is God’s communication in flesh. There is no communication more important than that of the gospel, and there is no communication more glorious than that of the Word incarnated in our Lord Jesus Christ, praise His name.
5. Finally, I have taken a very traditional approach to the Proverbs this evening by hovering over the surface of the book and plucking verses topically out from it. While this approach is not necessarily invalid, if done with the whole of Scriptures in mind, it does ignore the fact that the Proverbs were not written to be read in this way – although that is how we most often read them. I am just learning that the Proverbs are written as poetry and therefore are not simply short pithy statements meant to stand alone and communicate unrelated morsels of truth, but rather are written as poetry is – with a beginning, an end, and meaningful progression of ideas and relationships in between. I am just barely beginning to see this and it changes the way you read this book, particularly, you see the book as far richer, deeper, and instructive. I look forward to learning with you to read Proverbs this way, especially as we move toward the fall Sunday School class.

Practical Wisdom for Dealing with Anger

By Ed McNeese

Introduction This Sunday evening we continue our four-part series from the book of Proverbs. Tonight we will be looking at anger in the book of Proverbs. Over the next weeks, we will be continuing in the series with the topics of relationships and folly as they are addressed in the book of Proverbs.

Last week Devon introduced us to the book of Proverbs in his sermon on communications. He said that “Proverbs are not simply short, pithy, statements which have popular appeal – rather, they are the declared Word of God, able to impart life to man.” Proverbs is rich in theology, though not comprehensive. Proverbs reflects themes found throughout scripture; bringing them to us on a practical level that we may apply in our daily pursuit of righteousness. They call upon us to reflect upon how we might apply divine principles to life situations.

Proverbs shows us what it is like to be a wise person or a foolish person. Tonight we will examine anger and how we may be wise or foolish in how we handle it.

Unbridled anger is the source for much outward acts of violence and inward roots of bitterness. Whatever stages our anger may have reached, we can take biblical steps to honor and glorify God in the situation.

Though we will struggle with angry feelings as long as we live, it is how we deal with that anger that determines its affect on us.

Righteous Anger

Would you be shocked to hear that, “The Bible is about anger. Who is the angriest person in the Bible? *God*. When God looks at evil, “His anger does not turn away,” as Isaiah repeated over and over. In Romans, Paul mentions God's anger and its effects more than fifty times, beginning with, “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Romans 1:18). John says that the wrath of God “abides” on whoever will not believe in the Son of God for mercy: anger was, is, and will remain on their heads!

That God is angry tells us something very important. Anger can be utterly right, good, appropriate, beautiful, the only fair response to something evil, and the loving response on behalf of evil's victims....” [*The Journal of Biblical Counseling*. Volume 14. Number 1. Fall 1995]

God Expressed Righteous Anger

God expresses His glory and mercy through His righteous anger. Here are two quick examples of God's righteous anger with different outcomes.

In Exodus 32:10 the people of Israel "corrupted themselves" when they made a golden calf and worshipped it and sacrificed to it. God was so angry that He wanted Moses to "...let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them..." but God chose to show mercy and not destroy them.

In Ezekiel 23:25 God's anger at Judah's sin prompted His bringing Babylonians and others to deal severely with her. The passage sets forth how Judah's companion nations were the instruments of her judgment.

Jesus Expressed Righteous Anger

Jesus experienced anger and yet did not succumb to sin. We can share in His triumph for He lives within us to help us. We do not have to be helplessly swept up in the surge of angry feelings. Our new relationship to Christ gives us hope and power to deal righteously with anger's sudden attack and dispose of its lingering toxin.

Jesus said a lot of controversial things during his life. One of the things he said was that anger is a form of murder. Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment..." (Matthew 5:21-22).

Jesus knew that murder was the fruit, but anger was the root. And although not all anger ends in violence, all violence grows out of the roots of anger. Jesus knew the only way to confront the fruit of violence was to root it out where it starts, as anger.

But it is one thing to know that; quite another to actually root anger out of our lives. Everyone has anger; it's a universal emotion. We must learn to deal with our anger in a way that honors God.

We Can Respond with Righteous Anger

God's Word tells us that we need to be self-controlled in our anger. "In our union with Christ, the power of sin over us has been broken, and the Holy Spirit who dwells in us battles with our sinful nature on our behalf." [*Lost in the Middle*, p.204, Paul David Tripp] We can, like others sited in the Bible, respond correctly in our anger.

"He" [God] "speaks fully and frequently about the alternatives to sinful anger: trust, forgiveness, patience, contentment, the pursuit of justice, godly confrontation, all the varied strategies and attitudes of peacemaking, self-control, self-knowledge. Righteous anger is an excellent and constructive thing. Moses, Samson, David, and Paul, like Jesus, on occasion burned with this most rare righteousness." [*The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Volume 14. Number 1. Fall 1995]

Of all our emotions, anger is perhaps the rawest, strongest, and potentially the most destructive. While the Scriptures tell us that not all anger is sin. "Be angry

and do not sin;" (Ephesians 4:26), it is not surprising that anger is mentioned as the precursor of sin throughout the Scriptures.

Sinful Anger

Let's look at the same question we asked before from a different perspective. "Who is the angriest person in the Bible? *Satan*. His anger, also, does not turn away. He has "great wrath," being a "murderer from the beginning" even until now. Satan's anger springs from malice and the desire to hurt people. His anger, the paradigm of all sinful anger, is the antithesis of God's. Satan's hostility aims to make things wrong, in service to his own cravings. This also tells us something very important. Anger can be utterly wrong, bad, inappropriate, ugly, a completely destructive response. Such anger summarizes the very essence of evil: "I want my way and not God's, and because I can't have my way, I rage."

It is a curious and often confusing thing that the same word, "anger," speaks of both the finest and the foulest feelings and acts..... Sinful anger usurps God and does harm; godly anger loves, enthroning God and doing good to people." [*The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Volume 14. Number 1. Fall 1995]

God Wants Us to Purge Anger from Our Lives

God says that anger must be removed from our lives. It is not an option. Colossians 3:8 says "you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice..." Ephesians 4:31-32 is just as emphatic, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you..." Let's look at nature of anger from God's perspective.

God Finds Anger Disgusting

God finds anger disgusting. In Galatians 5:19-21 anger is listed in the midst of sins that are repulsive to a righteous God; like sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, etc. When we get sinfully angry it opens the door to other sin in our lives. Proverbs 29:22 tells us that --"A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression."

The Hebrew word translated "wrath" here is a graphic word. The Hebrew word literally pictures a person's nostrils flaring. This word describes more than irritation, but its red hot anger. This is white knuckled, wild eyed, sweating palms, bulging veins, clenched teeth kind of anger.

The angry (hot tempered in some translations) person is just as picturesque a term as "angry" in Hebrew. The word for "hot tempered" literally means "full of poison" or "full of venom." Like a snake with fangs full of lethal venom, the hot tempered person is full of poisonous venom just waiting to spill out. This kind of person commits lots of different kinds of sins, because anger blinds us with rage.

When we don't learn wise ways of dealing with our anger, it bubbles up in ways we don't like. And once it starts to bubble up, it's like a boiling pan of water that keeps pushing the lid off. Once we open the door, we suddenly find ourselves doing things and saying things we never imagined possible. We hear words coming

out of our mouths that in other circumstances would make us ashamed. We strike with our fists; throw things, scream and yell.

This of course was Jesus' point (in Matthew 5), that unresolved, uncontrolled anger eventually produces the fruit of violence. Uncontrolled anger opens the door.

God Says Uncontrolled Anger is Sin

So now that we understand better what uncontrolled anger does, how can we deal with it wisely? In Proverbs 29:11 God sees angry men as fools, "A fool gives full vent to his spirit" and contrasts it the response of a wise man that "but a wise man quietly holds back." Anger becomes sin when it is allowed to boil over without restraint, resulting in a "sawed-off shotgun" consequence in which everyone in earshot is hurt, leaving devastation in its wake...often with irreparable consequences.

Like many of the sayings in the book of Proverbs, this saying contrasts the foolish person with the wise person. The person who ignores the grain of God's wisdom gives full vent to his anger. When this person gets mad, it comes gushing out. Think about the air conditioner in your car. When you turn on your air conditioner, and put the air on full blast, opening up the vent as far as it will go, it comes blasting out. That's what foolish people do with their anger. It comes gushing out full blast. Often fully vented anger comes out as yelling, shouting, profanity, outbursts, even violence.

But notice the contrast here: It's not that the wise person doesn't vent his or her anger. This proverb does not say, "A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise person never gets mad." The wise person may still become angry, but he or she keeps themselves under control. The wise person opens the vent slowly, in a God-honoring righteous manner.

Intense anger and rage are like a bomb, and when we give full vent to our anger, we light the fuse. Once the fuse is lit, it's really hard to put it out. In fact, it's often impossible to put the fuse out once it's lit. Many people report blacking out in a rage, not remember what they did. When they finally come back to their senses, they can't believe what other people tell them that they did. Violence, destruction, hurtful words, profanity; all come from angry explosions.

God Wants Us to Avoid Confrontation with Angry People

Proverbs 20:3, "It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling."

This proverb is not telling us to avoid conflict at all costs. It's simply telling us that sometimes it's wise to avoid a conflict. A wise person—someone who lives with the grain of God's wisdom—knows when to avoid conflict, while a foolish person is quick to get in a conflict.

There are certain situations when it's best to simply avoid an argument. This is especially true when a person isn't open to correction. When a person is what Proverbs calls a "fool" you're likely to incite(or stir up) more anger (in you or them) by confronting that person. It is a wise person who learns when to avoid conflict.

Anger Damages Our Relationships with People

Look at Proverbs 30:33, “For pressing milk (or churning in some translations) milk produces curds (or butter), pressing (twisting) the nose produces blood, so pressing (stir up) anger produces strife.”

You need to know that the words “churn,” “twist,” and “stir up” in this verse are all the same Hebrew word. Proverbs gives us two images, the first of the churning of milk to produce butter. The second is a person who walks up to another person and twists their nose until it bleeds. Some of you may have grown up with brothers or sisters who did that to you when you were young. Well in the same way, stirring up anger produces strife in our relationships.

We do also things to stir up anger in our own hearts or press others to be angrier when we are angry. When we dwell on what another person did to anger us, we stir up anger like churning milk produces butter. When we hang out with people who tell us we have every right to be mad, when we rehearse our revenge in our minds again and again, we’re stirring up anger.

Now according to this proverb, doing this produces strife. This word describes a quarrel or argument between people. We often say or do something that destroys relationships.

Just talk to a parent who in a fit of rage kicked his teenage daughter out of the house and hasn’t seen her in four years. Or talk to a wife who lost her temper and called her husband a loser and ever since there’s been a distance in their marriage. Just as churning milk produces butter and a twisted nose produces blood, so uncontrolled anger produces strife in our relationships. When the anger is gone and we’re calm again, the relationship is still damaged, seemingly beyond remedy.

Anger Leads Us to Say Reckless Things

This brings us to Proverbs 12:18, “There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”

This is a contrast between the words that are spoken by a person whose anger is uncontrolled and the words spoken by a wise woman or man. Reckless words are like a sword, slashing and stabbing the other person. Whoever said, “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me” didn’t understand the power of words. My body can heal from being hit with a stick or a rock, but my heart doesn’t heal easily from reckless words spoken in a fit of rage. Every fight I got into as a child came from reckless words.

These are just some of the things that uncontrolled anger does in our lives. These are all negative consequences, things we’d rather not have characterize our lives. I know very few people who want to open the door to sin in their lives, who want to damage their relationships, and who want to say things that they’ll regret later. Yet I could put up an open microphone up here, and have testimony after testimony from people in our church who have stories about this very thing happening. In fact, all of us have probably experienced these things to one extent or another.

Responding to anger — Dealing With Anger Wisely

Anger of course is simply an emotion; it is given by God. We are made in God's image; therefore it is natural for us, as human, to get angry at times. But how do we deal with anger? It's what we do with that anger, how we express it that determines whether we're wise or not. So let's talk about how we can wisely deal with anger.

Gentle Words Diffuse Anger

The practice of answering gently will for the most part reduce the chance of anger.

That brings us to Proverbs 15:1, which tells us, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

The word "soft" means "gentle" and "calm". When we get mad, our words turn harsh. We overstate the situation, using words like "always" and "never" to describe situations that are rarely "always" and "never" situations. We let sarcasm drip from our mouths as we cut and slice with innuendos. We might even resort to put downs, calling people "idiots," "morons," "jerks," and "stupid." Jesus said when we use those kinds of words; we're murdering people with our mouth. We're planting the kinds of seeds that grow into murder and violence when we call someone an idiot, or jerk, or stupid, or a moron. We might even use profanity, screaming and shouting words that we'd normally never use.

So we're told by this proverb to use a gentle answer. A gentle answer doesn't tell the other person what they want to hear, but a gentle word is a soft answer, an answer that is soft in tone and in content. There's no sarcasm, no disdain, no hatred. A gentle answer is a sincere word, a caring word.

Now a gentle answer doesn't always diffuse anger. This is not a guarantee or a promise. The sayings in Proverbs are generalizations, observations about what works most of the time in life. Proverbs is telling us what will diffuse anger most of the time. When we're getting mad or when we encounter an angry person, we're wise if we use gentle words to help diffuse the anger.

Patience – The Contrast to Anger

We need to have patience when dealing with anger. In Proverbs 15:18 we see that, "A hot tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention." In 14:29, "Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly." And, in 16:32 "Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city."

Anger and rage are contagious. One person's anger can stir up anger and rage in other people. Just think about road rage, how it spreads from one driver to another, to another. We saw earlier in Proverbs 29:22, "A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger (a hot tempered) causes much transgression." refers to a person who's full of poison or venom. The picture is a snake whose venom sacs are full and ready to poison someone with a bite. This is what happens to us when we get enraged, we become venomous, poisonous. We stir up the situation.

But it's the patient person who brings a sense of calm to a tumultuous situation. The Hebrew word for "patience" means "long suffering." In fact, the Hebrew word literally means "long of nose." If anger and rage refers to a person's nostrils flaring, the "long suffering" person is "long of nose" in the sense that it takes a lot to get their nostrils to flare out in rage. In the Bible, patience is not resignation, giving in to your circumstances. Patience is a positive attitude of active endurance, of bearing up under difficult circumstances. You could translate the New Testament word for "patience" as staying power.

Remember the story of the tortoise and the hare? It was the tortoise who had the patience, and this led the tortoise to win the race.

Now how do you cultivate the virtue of patience or "staying power" in life? There's a common joke among Christians that you should never pray for patience. Why is that? Because all of us know that patience is often formed in the midst of difficult circumstances that test our patience. If you pray for patience, God might bring a difficult boss into your life or a situation where you have to wait and endure.

Well you might not pray for it, but it is part of God's plan for your life to develop the virtue of patience in your life. This is because Jesus himself was a man of patience, a man with perseverance and endurance. And God's plan for you, if you're a follower of Jesus, is to transform you into the image of Jesus. So patience is on the agenda.

I don't know about you, but when I try to be more patient, I end up with less patience. Patience isn't one of those things we can just try harder to be. Wouldn't it be nice if a part of our brain that secreted endurance enzymes? But of course it doesn't.

That's why the Bible describes the virtue of patience as one of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives. In other words, being empowered by God's Holy Spirit will produce patience in us. It's not something that comes from our own resources, but it's something that comes supernaturally as we surrender our lives to God and seek the empowering of God's Spirit. God also uses trials and difficulties to cultivate the virtue of patience in our lives. We might not always pray for these things, but they'll come, and when they do, patience is one of the primary character traits God is developing in us.

Think about the relationships with the people in your life; your wife or husband, boss, children, parents, teachers. Where is God working the most in your life right now? This is where your ability to express your anger appropriately will be tested. We are wise about anger when we develop the virtue of patience.

Do Not Respond To Anger with Anger

We must never take it upon ourselves to play god and exact punishment on our own when responding to anger. Romans 12:19 "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."" Proverbs 20:22 has a similar imperative, "Do not say, "I will repay evil"; Wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you."

The clearest gauge of whether anger is right or wrong in its expression is whether it acts to condemn or to offer help. We are called to put our faith in the fact that "Vengeance is mine, says the Lord, I will repay" (Romans 12:19). Our anger is not meant to be punitive, to get even. It is meant to do good first, and obviously, to the victims or potential victims of evil. [*The Journal of Biblical Counseling*. Volume 14. Number 1. Fall 1995]

Be Careful When Choosing Your Companions

...Whether it is friends or your mate. We are creatures that mimic the behavior that our friends model.

"Habits, styles, and tendencies to sinful anger are easily acquired from others. Many children who had never thought of letting fly an angry curse-they had never even heard all the bad words-are surprised when one slips out a week after first riding on the school bus. Parental shock perhaps quickly nips habit formation. But later, when they live in a college dorm or land their first job on a construction crew, in a factory, or in the military, the four letter words creep in as all-purpose modifiers: "Pass the %\$#@! ['fill in the blank'] butter" isn't usually learned at home.

By modeling, angry and hostile curses become routine ways to respond to the mildest frustration. With good reason the Bible says, "Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare." (Proverbs 22:24-25). [*The Journal of Biblical Counseling*. Volume 14. Number 1. Fall 1995]

We Need to Get Over Anger Quickly

When anger does occur, you cannot let anger to cause you to sin; and anger should not be allowed to fester and turn into bitterness. The matter of provocation should be dealt with righteously and brought to a quick end. If we don't settle the sin quickly it will open the door for more sin. "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil."(Ephesians 4:26-27)

Conclusion

How can we wise in managing our anger? First we need to understand what anger does: Uncontrolled anger opens the door to sin, damages our relationships, and leads us to say reckless words. Then we need to understand how to deal with our anger wisely, by expressing it without exploding, by diffusing it with gentle words, by cultivating the virtue of patience, and by knowing when to avoid conflict.

One can properly handle anger by the following:

Recognize and Repent of Our Own Anger

Recognizing and admitting one's selfish anger and wrong handling of anger as sin (Proverbs 28:13; John 1:9). This confession should be both to God and to those who have been hurt by our anger. Nor should one minimize that sin by

calling it “getting a little hot the other day” or by blame-shifting: “well if you wouldn’t have acted the way you did...”

Look for God in the Trial

Seeing God in the trial. This is especially important when people have done something to offend YOU specifically. James 1:2-4; Romans 8:28-29; and Genesis 50:20 all point to the fact that God is sovereign and in complete control over EVERY circumstance and person that enters your path. NOTHING happens to you that He does not cause or allow. And as all of these verses share, God is a GOOD God (Psalm 145:8, 9, 17) and does and allows all things in your life for your good and the good of others! Reflecting on this truth to the point of where it moves from our heads to our hearts will alter how we react to those who hurt us deeply.

Leave Room for God’s Wrath

Make room for God’s wrath. This is especially important in cases of injustices, especially when done by “evil” men to “innocent” people. Genesis 50:19 and Romans 12:19 both share that we should not play God. God is righteous and just, and we can trust Him who knows all and sees all to do justly (Genesis 18:25).

Don’t Return Evil for Evil

Do not return evil for evil (Genesis 50:21; Romans 12:21). This is vital to altering our anger into love. As one’s actions flow from one’s heart, so also one’s heart can be altered by one’s actions (Matthew 5:43-48)...that is, one can change one’s feelings toward another by changing how one chooses to act toward that person.

Communicate

Communicate to solve the problem. There are four basic rules of communication shared in Ephesians 4:15,25-32:

Be honest and speak (Ephesians 4:15, 25). People can’t read our minds, but speak the truth IN LOVE.

Stay current (Ephesians 4:26-27). Don’t “sand bag,” letting the list of what is bothering you build up until the “dam busts” and you lose your temper. Dealing with and sharing what is bothering you before it gets to that point is important. Keep a short list!

Attack the problem, not the person (Ephesians 4:29, 31). Along this line, one must keep in mind the importance of keeping the volume of one’s voice low (Proverbs 15:1). Yelling is usually a form of attack toward the person.

Act, don’t react (Ephesians 4:31-32). Because of our fallen nature, our “knee-jerk” reflex, our first impulse is usually a sinful one (verse 31). The time spent in counting to ten should be used to reflect upon the godly way to respond (verse 32) and to remind yourself how anger is to be used to solve problems not create bigger ones.

Solve Your Part of the Problem

Lastly you must act to solve your part of the problem (Acts 12:18). You cannot control how others act or respond, but you can make changes that need to be made on your part. Overcoming one's temper is not something that is usually accomplished overnight. But with reliance upon God through prayer for help, Bible study, and reliance upon God's Holy Spirit, it can be overcome. As one has allowed anger to become entrenched in one's life by habitual practice, one must also practice responding correctly until it too becomes a habit replacing the old ways.

Fainting, Faking and the Sweetness of Wisdom

Proverbs 24:10-14

By Dan Turner

Introduction An old recipe for rabbit stew starts off saying, “First catch the rabbit.” I like the simplicity and wisdom of this saying; for it starts off putting first things first. Without the rabbit there will be no stew. The obvious question that initially confronted me when asked to preach from the book of Proverbs on relationships was, “What shall I talk about? What specific relationship should I focus on and what angle on relationship shall I take? And from what passage of the Proverbs should I draw my sermon?”

So, the first thing I did to prepare for tonight was to read the book of Proverbs prayerfully and carefully. I noticed that 31 chapters of this book address relationship. It is filled to overflowing with people living with people under their Creator. It also reflects life as messy and loud and dangerous and happy and peaceful and successful. It locates life in community and says that relationship is delightful and distressing. It calls us to reflect upon what life truly is and how it operates. It never treats relationship as simple and two dimensional. Rather, relationship seen in the book of Proverbs is complex and robust.

The second thing I did in preparation for this message was to think upon what God has been highlighting for us recently here at Clearcreek. I thought upon the first few chapters of Genesis and Russ’s messages. I was reminded about God’s design to fill the Earth with His goodness and glory through His creation. I reminisced about man’s duty in relationship; namely to gladly be fruitful and multiply and thus preserve and promote God’s glory throughout all the Earth. I thought upon the intrusion of sin and how it perverted the purpose of relationship. Desire to kill rather than keep watch over God’s people can be seen in Cain who said, “Am I my brother’s keeper”?

I also revisited January’s teaching and the pleasures and pressures of rearing children. It seemed clear that watching out for each other for the sake of God’s supremacy and our safety was the point. I thought upon what we’ve been going through in Bible class on Sunday morning. Keeping watch over each other through relationships is an essential and ongoing topic for us as a family of believers. The accent for the first part of 2005 seems to be on living with each other carefully, prayerfully, sacrificially, joyfully, lovingly; in other words, living redemptively for the glory of His reputation and good of His congregation.

By pondering the book of Proverbs and reflecting upon Clearcreek Chapel I “caught the rabbit”. I began to see what specific angle on relationship I should take and from what passage of the Proverbs I should draw my sermon.

Turn in your Bibles to Proverbs 24 as we take a look at vv.10-14 and how God's New Covenant promise is carried out in His New Covenant Community. (Pray)

Have you ever been frightened by the thought that you will not make it through the difficulties and deceptions of this life; that you will become a church statistic of shipwrecked faith (1Tim.1:19)? A couple of months ago I got a phone call from a dear brother in Christ who mentioned that in moments when he catches glimpses of remaining sin in his heart he fears that he will veer off and pursue sin and not make it to the end and thus be saved (Matt.10:22).

It's easy to identify with him isn't it? If we were left to our own powers to persevere, we all would end in ruin. We would all run after deceptive delights and dine with the devil in damnation. Beloved, we must hear precious truths like:

- He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion (Phil.1:6)
- Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy (Jude 24)
- I will put the fear of me in their hearts that they may not turn from me (Jer.32:40)
- The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To Him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen (2Tim.4:18).

Are you anxious that you will not make it through the difficulties and deceptions of this life? These stunning promises on which our confidence grows and upon which our souls rest need to be heard! But we must do more than perceive sounds of truth. We must by faith understand and participate in how these truths are carried out by the dependable power of God's sovereign grace.

Tonight's subject is *how the Lord upholds His promises to his people through His people.*

How does the Lord "keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy"? What is the context in which the Lord who "began a good work in you" will bring it to completion? Let's look together at Proverbs 24:10-14.

IF YOU FAINT IN THE DAY OF ADVERSITY, YOUR STRENGTH IS SMALL. RESCUE THOSE WHO ARE BEING TAKEN AWAY TO DEATH; HOLD BACK THOSE WHO ARE SUMBLING TO THE SLAUGHTER.

IF YOU SAY, "BEHOLD, WE DID NOT KNOW THIS," DOES NOT HE WHO WEIGHS THE HEART PERCEIVE IT? DOES NOT HE WHO KEEPS WATCH OVER YOUR SOUL KNOW IT AND WILL HE NOT REPAY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS WORK?

MY SON, EAT HONEY, FOR IT IS GOOD, AND THE DRIPPINGS OF THE HONEYCOMB ARE SWEET TO YOUR TASTE. KNOW THAT WISDOM IS SUCH TO YOUR SOUL;

IF YOU FIND IT, THERE WILL BE A FUTURE, AND YOUR HOPE WILL NOT BE CUT OFF.

What I want to focus on tonight is redemptive relationships. That is, I want us to see that the context in which God's promised work of rescuing us and renewing us and restoring us is redemptive relationships. What I see in our passage for tonight are three central things about redemptive relationships. I will treat them under these headings.

1. Redemptive Relationship Responsibilities
2. Redemptive Relationship Weakeners
3. Redemptive Relationship Strengtheners

Redemptive Relationship Responsibilities

Let's begin thinking on Redemptive Relationships as we notice its responsibilities. We see this in v.11. In v.11 we hear a command: **RESCUE THOSE WHO ARE BEING TAKEN AWAY TO DEATH; HOLD BACK THOSE WHO ARE STUMBLING TO THE SLAUGHTER.**

Redemptive relationships understand that we are our brother's keeper. Those indwelt by the Spirit are not Cain-like who have animosity against their brothers and sisters; who are motivated to kill rather than to keep each other. Verse 11 talks about a general responsibility of rescuing. Whether it is within our homes or within the Chapel, we are to keep watch over each other and intervene when danger arises. Redemptive relationships understand that God does not transform his people right away. He could. And we often wish he would. But for reasons known better to Him than to us he allows us often to stumble in our own remaining sin. And then calls upon His people to rescue His people by means of His grace. This is what we are talking about tonight. This is what we mean by Redemptive Relationships.

The need for rescue

To understand *how the Lord upholds His promises to his people through His people* first look with me at the danger we all face. Whether we have been in the faith 20 yrs. or 20 days, someone wages a constant battle to deceive and harden our hearts. The language of verse 10 reminds the reader of the first part of the book of Proverbs; especially chapters 7-9. Look back with me at 9:13ff. Here we come across *Woman Folly* whose seductive speech tries to persuade those going straight on their way.

“The woman Folly is loud; she is seductive and knows nothing. She sits at the door of her house; she takes a seat on the highest places of the town calling to those who pass by who are going straight on their way”.

What does she hope to accomplish? Look closely at vv.16-18.

“Whoever is simple, let him turn in here. And to him who lacks sense she says, “stolen water is sweet and bread eaten in secret is pleasant”. But he does not know that the dead are there that their guests are in the depths of Sheol”.

We see the trance-like effect of listening to her voice by noticing 7:21-22,25-27.

“With much seductive speech she persuades him with her smooth talk she compels him. All at once he follows her as an ox goes to the slaughter... Let not your heart turn aside to her ways; do not stray into her paths, for many a victim has she laid low and all her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is the way to Sheol going down to the chambers of death”.

In a cacophony of advise there is a unifying voice; the voice of Lady Folly. Her aim is single. She desires to persuade those going straight on their way to turn and give her their affections. Her strategy is reflective of the garden scene of Genesis 3 and the crafty serpent. She wants to foster in professing believers a “sinful, unbelieving heart” (cf. Heb.3:12) so that we will doubt that God has our best interest at hand. Lady Folly aspires to convince us that we will be missing something good if we believe the Lord and follow His way (cf. Ps.84:11; Num.24:11). This voice portrays itself as sweet and agreeable; smooth and satisfying. The subjects Lady Folly gives counsel over are many. Things like:

- Sex
- Money
- Time
- Priorities
- Relationships
- Suffering

In these and others like them Lady Folly attempts to sway us into thinking self-centeredly and desire private and immediate gratification. We will use sex, money, time to serve our private and perverted agendas. We will view relationships merely horizontally and see how people exist to serve us. We will recoil at the thought of suffering and schedule everything to move in the opposite direction away from pain and problems and perplexity and move toward ease and safety and predictability.

With much seductive speech she persuades us and all at once we follow her as an ox goes to the slaughter (7:21f).

The means of rescue

Beloved, believers in Jesus Christ needing rescued from sin is seen in this proverb. Life is not peacetime. War to win our allegiance has been issued. This is most vividly portrayed in Proverbs 24:11. It also is seen in Matt.18 where we notice not only the need for rescue but also the means of it. Turn with me to that familiar passage; Matt.18.

Here in Matt. 18 we come across God's search and rescue mission. We notice how He cares for His people and will go to extraordinary effort to rescue the gone astray ones. Listen to this parable in vv. 12-14. (read)

What comfort it is to know that "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion". What peace we have when we believe that "The sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out...and if one of them has gone astray does he not ...go in search of the one that went astray...so that none of His sheep should perish (Phil.1:6; Jn.10:3; Matt.18:12; Jn.10:27f)?"

This picture is a picture of eternal security. But eternal security as we see here is not automatic! As we read on in Matt.18 we come to the means God uses to rescue His people.

Vv.15-20 tell us the means the Lord appointed to rescue His people and persevere them to the end. The means and method He ordained in order to uphold His promise of eternal security is redemptive relationships.

This view of relationship must transform how we respond to each other. We must love one another, give preference to one another, forgive one another, serve one another, admonish one another, speak truth in love to one another, care for one another, pray for one another, consider one another, correct one another, console one another. This is a sketch of covenant community. This is what redemptive relationship looks like. This is the context in which God works His rescuing love for His people.

Redemptive Relationship Weakeners

With that as a description of redemptive relationship and how God uses His people to rescue His people let's continue noticing our text for tonight. We see in this passage three conditions all starting with the word "if". These conditions introduce to us two weakeners and one strengthener of redemptive relationships. We will start with the weakeners.

If you faint

v.10

One thing which hinders redemptive relationships is seen in verse ten. "If you faint in the day of adversity your strength is small". The day of adversity is a broad heading. It can naturally be applied to the next verse and how we are to intervene in each other's life. When danger is upon one of our brothers or sisters; when Lady Folly's voice seems plausible to a believer, the church needs to activate the "search and rescue mission". This truly is a "day of adversity". The Proverb tells us that redemptive relationship will weaken (this covenant community will start breaking down) if when we think about entering into someone's life we "faint" (become cowardly) and withdraw from our responsibilities. Though at times redemptive relationship is a difficult ministry, God calls us to be our brother's keeper. When this seems overwhelming to us, we experience "fainting". We are abandoning our redemptive relationship responsibilities. The reason stated in v.10 for this can be remembered in one word: weakness

- What weakens Redemptive Relationships is weakness.

If you feign

v.12

The second relationship weakener might be remembered by the condition “If you feign”. This is seen in v.12. If you say, “Behold, we did not know this”. The pronoun “this” points back to the danger and the need for rescuing a brother or sister. Our sinful tendency to be a spectator rather than a participant in God’s search and rescue mission can be viewed from this perspective. “I did not know there were problems. I assumed everything was Okay. I didn’t see the marks of drifting and falling away. I was unaware of the evils”.

When we say such things and yet have inkling that all is not well, we are supplying a weakener to God’s redemptive plan. We are striving against the Lord of salvation. Deception, dishonesty and duplicity are treachery to the body of Christ. As we participate in faking, we participate with Lady Folly. We make ourselves partners with the father of lies. Satan not the Savior is our comrade.

Why would any of us do such a thing? Why would we deliberately act as though we know nothing when all along we sensed there were problems? The proverb unpacks it for us. It locates the reason in wavering in unbelief over 1) what God does and 2) what God will do.

What God does (present ministry)

Perceives

You see this don’t you in v.12. Through this question the point is clear. We act like we knew nothing because we disbelieve that God knows our motives. We do not think that He sees our hearts clearly. This verse says that our souls are the most public entity in the universe. We are naked before God...always!

Protects

The second reason for feigning is that we disbelieve that God has been and is gracious to us. He has kept us from straying and leads us in ways of righteousness. Our hearts would wander if it were not for God’s protection of us. By doubting this we find keeping watch over our brothers and sisters unappealing. This verse tells us that we are kept by God...always!

What God will do (future ministry)

Punishes

The third reason this Proverb gives us for weakening redemptive relationships through deception is that we disbelieve that God will do something about it. God will not be mocked. He repays man according to his work...always!

When relationships needing help are ignored and we pretend that we are unaware, we are double minded and abandoning our redemptive relationship responsibilities. The reason stated in v.12 for this can be remembered in one word: wavering

- What weakens Redemptive Relationships is wavering.

Redemptive Relationship Strengtheners

Vv.13-14

Up to this point we've heard that God's promise to rescue us from our wandering ways and to bring us safely to His eternal joys is found in a certain location (that is, a specific atmosphere or environment). This context we've said is redemptive relationship (i.e. a biblical local church). When we are empowered by God's grace to intervene by rescuing each other from danger we are experiencing the covenant community. We are enjoying redemptive relationships.

This is wonderful. But this can be weakened. These "redemptive relationship weakeners" (as we've named them) were introduced to us in the text through conditions starting with the word "if". "If you faint" (v.10) and "If you say" (v.12) set up for us that which undermines God's redemptive work in our midst. In other words, we will not get involved in each other's lives if we are weak or if we are dishonest.

If you find

V.14

Now we want to turn our attention to the third condition we see in this passage that sets up for us that which strengthens God's redemptive work in our midst.

Let me draw this message to a close by drawing your attention to vv.13-14. This redemptive relationship strengthener might be remembered by the condition "If you find" (read vv.).

In v.13, we come across who he specifically has been addressing. His son is the subject of these verses. His son was to find wisdom so as to not be weak when the day of adversity hits. His son was to find wisdom so as to not be disinterested and dishonest when someone needed help. To find wisdom gave him a future and a hope. We find here what strengthens redemptive relationships.

The reason stated in v.14 for this can be remembered in one word: wisdom

- What strengthens Redemptive Relationships is wisdom.

Now one could end, I suppose, the message tonight with this word. But I don't believe the message would be complete by doing so. What I found curious in these verses is how the father tries to persuade the son to find wisdom. He first says, "eat honey". Eat honey? Does that strike you as being odd? How does this strange command relate to what we've been talking about tonight? The clue to answering these questions is found in the first part of v.14. We are bound by Scripture and curiosity to figure out how v.14 relates to v.13. What does the command in verse 13 have to do with v.14?

The answer is that he connects the sweetness of physical pleasure (i.e. sweet honey to the tongue) to the sweetness of spiritual pleasure (i.e. sweet wisdom to the soul). Do you see this? Honey is sweet to your tongue. Wisdom is sweet to your soul (cf. Pr. 2:10; 3:17; 22:18). What he desired to do for his son was to assist him in not merely agreeing with this truth. He wanted him to sense the reality of it. The father desires the son to have a perception of and a passion for wisdom. He wants him not only to realize but relish the wonder of wisdom. By

focusing upon and having fervor for wisdom, his son will be used to “rescue those who are being taken away to death”.

In his book “When I Don’t Desire God” Piper talking on how to fight for joy quotes Jonathan Edwards. Listen to this quote as he makes a distinction between opinion and sense.

There is a difference between having a rational judgment[an opinion] that honey is sweet and having a sense of its sweetness...So there is a difference between believing that a person is beautiful and having a sense of [her] beauty. The former may be obtained by hearsay but the latter only by seeing the countenance...When the heart is sensible of the beauty and amiableness of a thing it necessarily feels pleasure in the apprehension. It is implied in a person’s being heartily sensible of the loveliness of a thing that the idea of it is sweet and pleasant to the soul.¹

Now do not let me lose you at the end of this message. Stay with me lest this passage and message unravel and the truth does not set you free.

He is urging his son to be not a spectator but a participator in redemptive relationships; rescuing people from the danger of *Lady Folly*. The only way his son will have the strength and integrity to do this is to find wisdom as sweet to his soul. To realize and relish wisdom as sweet is to find the energy and drive and motivation necessary to reach out to those stumbling to the slaughter and help them back on to the way of life.

“What, then, is wisdom”? in the wrong question. “Who, then, is wisdom”? is the right one! When we go back to Proverbs 8-9, we see wisdom personified. *Lady Wisdom*, opposite of *Lady Folly*, is stunning. She is building her home and calling out to all to come in and delight in her loveliness. Who is this wisdom? 1Corinthians 1:30 says, God made [Christ Jesus] our wisdom. When we read this passage as well as all of Proverbs we must see what the father wanted the son to sense and experience. We began to hear what the Lord says to us. Oh, for ears and eyes (and even taste buds) at this point. We must sense Jesus Christ as the one and only true sweetness to our souls. He grants insight and knowledge and skill by which to make it successfully through this life. Yes; this is true. But oh, so much more does He give. He gives Himself to His people. As they perceive and pleasure in Jesus Christ strength and honesty well up in the soul. The soul then looks out and pities and cares for brothers and sisters who are duped into thinking that *Lady Folly* is sweet to the soul. Those sweetened by the Savior intervene. Those counting Christ as gain get involved. Those treasuring Christ more than life watch over their brothers and sisters! And when they need to intervene, they do. This type of people rescues people by relishing Christ and then representing Him as the Rescuer (cf. 2Cor.5:14ff). Jesus Christ is the sole redeemer and rescuer and restorer. People do not need people. They need Jesus Christ. And those who taste and see that Jesus is sovereign joy² in the Uni-

¹ Jonathan Edwards, “A Divine and Supernatural Light” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol.2, 14.

² The phrase “sovereign joy” comes from Augustine in *The Confessions*; p.214 (this page corresponds to my copy of the book). For an excellent article on how a superior pleasure in a supreme object

verse will not cower back from the search and rescue mission. Pleasure in Christ as honey to the tongue and you will risk relationships to save relationships.

Conclusion This is the charge with which I leave you.

- Remove Redemptive Relationship Weakeners
 - Relish Christ
- Remember Redemptive Relationship Responsibilities
 - Rescue His people
 - Risk comfort
 - Represent Christ

Come and find wisdom (JESUS CHRIST) as sweet to your soul.

And then partner up with God and His people in rescuing, renewing and restoring God's people in the context of redemptive relationship!

(i.e. God in Christ) is needed to drive out inferior pleasures (i.e. sin) see John Piper's work *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy; God's triumphant grace in the lives of Augustine, Luther and Calvin* found in Clearcreek Chapel's bookstore.

The Invitation of Lady Wisdom and Woman Folly

Proverbs 9:1-18

By Ken Ebert

Introduction This Sunday evening is the last in our four-part series from the book of Proverbs. We have gleaned much over these past weeks as we have look into what Gods Word has taught us through Proverbs.

Devon started the series off introducing to us what a Proverb is, and why Proverbs are different then the rest of the bible. He also showed us how Proverbs “fit in” to the redemptive-historical flow of Scripture, and what Proverbs says about the source, value, and characteristic of communication. Devon also challenged us to think about the book of Proverbs and its relevance for today.

Ed taught us practical wisdom for dealing with anger from the Word, and showed us the differences between righteous and sinful anger, and then how to have a Godly respond to both.

Dan focused on redemptive relationships. He gave us a close look at three central truths about relationships, its responsibilities, its weakness’, and strengths. Dan challenged us to come and find wisdom that is sweet to your soul through (JESUS CHRIST). And then to partner up with God and His people in rescuing, renewing and restoring God’s

people in the context of redemptive relationship!

Tonight we will be looking into Proverbs chapter (9:1-18) at the contrast between Wisdom and Folly and see what Gods Word has to say about the outcome of the invitation we choose. (Pray)

When Moses came to the end of his life he assembled the people and delivered a final exposition of the law, and when he reached the finally of that sermon he left the people with a choice, which is recorded in Deuteronomy (30:15-20) “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. (v.16) If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it, (v.17)But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, (v.18) I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. (v.19) I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, (v.20) loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him,

for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

Tonight as we look at the invitation of Lady Wisdom & Woman Folly we are similarly presented with a life and death choice. Will we accept Wisdoms invitation to seek her and find life or will we be incited by the false promises of Folly and choose death. Turn with me to Proverbs chapter 9. Tonight we will be looking at the invitation of Lady Wisdom and Woman Folly, and the similarities and differences between the two from verses (1-18).

Represented as Two Women

In this chapter Wisdom and Folly are represented as two women. The both live on a hill in the city. Both invite people. Both invite the same people. Both will have a profound effect on your life. The people that the invitation is given to must decide which one of the two they shall go to, and depending on the decision they make the visitors will choose and end up in one or two places.

Arrangement

Before we go any further lets look at how this chapter is structured. Wisdom and Folly are the two main themes in Proverbs chapters (1-9). Chapter 9 serves as the conclusion bringing together the primary themes of the first 8 chapters. Chapter 9 here is a point-counterpoint arrangement, which most of you are familiar with called a “chiasm.

Lady Wisdom

(9:1-6)

In (vv.1-6) we see Lady Wisdom. (v.1) Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn her seven pillars. (2)She has slaughtered her beasts; she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table. (3) She has sent out her young woman to call from the highest places in the town, (4) “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!” To him who lacks sense she says, (5) “Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. (6) Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight.”

Response to wisdom

(9:7-9))

In (vv.7-9) we see the response to Wisdom. (V.7) Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. (8) Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you. (9) Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.

Foundation of wisdom

(9:10-11)

In (vv.10-11) we see the foundation of Wisdom. (V.10) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. (11) For by me your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life.

Consequences of the response (9:12)

In (v.12) we see the consequences of the response. If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you scoff, you alone will bear it.

Woman Folly (9:13-18)

And in (vv.13-18) we see Woman Folly. (v.13) The Woman Folly is loud; (14) she is seductive and knows nothing. She sits at the door of her house; she takes a seat on the highest places of the town, (15) calling to those who pass by, who are going straight on their way, (16) “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!” And to him who lacks sense she says, (17) “Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.” (18) But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

The effect of this format is to highlight Lady Wisdom and Woman Folly as two opposing figures and to focus our attention upon (vv.10-11), which act as the summary of the chapter.

The Similarities of Wisdom & Folly (v.1) (v.14)

As we look at some of the similarities of Wisdom and Folly we can see why at times it may be hard to tell them apart. Their presence is obvious, and their invitation can be heard by all and they can be seen by all. In (v.1) we see that Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn her seven pillars. In (v. 14) Folly sits at the door of her house; she takes a seat on the highest places of the town.

Both give an invitation (vv.3-4) (vv.15-16)

Both give an invitation to the simple. (Vv.3-4) She (Wisdom)has sent out her young women to call from the highest places in the town, “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!” The Bible here does not mean these are simple people who lack intelligence; these are person who are trapped in sin because they follow everything that is wrong. They are unable to discern what is right. (Vv.15-16) Folly is calling to those who pass by,” Whoever is simple, let him turn in here! Both would love to invite you into their house. They would love for you to sit down with them and chat, and have you tell all about yourself. They both are interested in your life and the decisions you make. Both are competing for your affections, and would love to give you the benefit of their experience. As Dan shared with us last week Lady Wisdom and Woman Folly have insight into sex, money, time, priorities, relationships, and suffering. They are very hospitable. They want to meet your needs. These two women at times can be difficult to tell apart.

In (v.3) we see Lady Wisdom is pursuing us. We see Lady Wisdom has sent out her young women to call from the highest places in the town. The call of wisdom is public not secrets. Unlike Lady Wisdom, who prepared for (vv. 1-2) and searched out her guests, (vv. 3-6), Woman Folly merely sat at the door and called out. But Folly, like Wisdom, calls from the highest point of the city (cf. v. 3).

Notice Folly appealed to those who passed by. (cf. 7:8, 10). Look back at Proverbs (7:8-9) (v.7) “Passing along the street near her corner, taking the road to her

house in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness. And behold, the woman meets him, dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart.

James (1:14-15) talks about how our hearts having its own desire are led astray by sin that we have allowed to take root and capture our imagination. (v.14) But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. (v.15) Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.³ The source of temptation is from within a person; it is his own evil desire, lust, or inner craving. He is dragged away and enticed. This inner craving draws a person out like a fish drawn from its hiding place, and then entices him. So a person both builds and baits his own trap.⁴ So Folly sits. She doesn't have to go out. Left to our own secret desires and cravings we will find her and the opportunity to meet with her will come soon.

We see both offers a meal (v.2) Lady Wisdom has slaughtered her beasts; she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table. (V.5) "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. She has prepared her meat; she has mixed her sweet wine and laid it all-out on the banquet table. And then Wisdom invites us to come and fest with her. Folly says (v.16b) "Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." She (Folly) entices a man to sin. The offer is not wine and meat (which represents wisdom), but water that is stolen. The water will seem sweeter than wine because it is stolen. Folly is self-serving, and she will encourage you to be the same. In Proverbs 5:15-19 we see water in the context of sexual activity with the adulteress, which would seem at that moment to be more enjoyable than learning wisdom.

Both (Wisdom) and (Folly) use a Proverb. (V.6) Wisdom says leave your simple ways and live and walk in the way of insight." (V.17) Folly says "Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." So even while the calling out is similar Wisdom and Folly are very different.

Wisdom & Folly Differences

Now let's look at the differences between Wisdom & Folly. Again we see Wisdom carefully prepared her food. She serves meat and wine, this is an expensive meal a filling meal. She has taken care to prepare a meal that will be satisfying. Wisdom is humble she serves you. Folly offers bread and water a meal that has been stolen, and she has not taken the time to personally prepare the meal for you. Folly offers a meal that is empty and will leave you wanting for more. Her drink is stolen, and her bread is to be eaten in secret.

The main difference between Wisdom and Folly is the final outcome; it simply is a choice between life and death. Verse 18 is very clear about the household and

³*The Holy Bible : English standard version.* 2001 (Jas 1:14-15). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁴Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures.* Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

meal of Folly (v.18) But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol. While Folly's invitation may seem attractive, the end result is not life (cf. v. 11); it is death (cf. 2:18; 5:5; 7:27). Lady Folly is obviously a wayward woman. This suggests that sexual immorality is the height of Folly. The two paths of Wisdom and Folly resulting in life or death reach a climax in chapter 9. Almost every verse in the remainder of the book points to one or both of these paths and/or their consequences.⁵

How to Discern Between Wisdom & Folly

As we have looked at the similarities and differences between Wisdom & Folly we see that they can appear very similar, but have very different outcomes depending on which invitation you will choose. So how can you tell the difference and decide which invitation to accept? Does the Bible show us how to make a correct judgment so we don't follow the way of folly? The answer is found in (v.10) The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. If we develop a Fear of the Lord and grow in our knowledge of Him then we will have discovered the beginning of Wisdom, and have insight.

What does "the fear of the Lord" refer to?

When we think of fear, we associate the word with terror. Webster's Dictionary defines fear as "a feeling of anxiety and agitation produced by the presence or nearness of danger, evil, pain, etc.: Stop and think how you would describe the feeling of fear. Is it when you are in the woods or in your backyard and come face to face with a snake or spider? Is it when you have to go to the doctor or dentist, or about to undergo surgery you experience fear. Maybe it is when you find yourself in a time of extreme danger.

Fear in the context in which it is used by Solomon is reverence, awe, or a great respect for God. Solomon is saying that we are to have a deep reverence and respect for God.

What, then, does it mean to fear the Lord?

What, then, does it mean to fear the Lord? If we are to learn wisdom and knowledge so we don't walk in the way of folly, it must begin with the fear of the Lord. Our main goal should be to glorify God in all and everything we do.

When we truly fear the Lord, we will recognize that He is the sovereign Creator. He is the Father and we are the children. This attitude will be obvious in our being obedient to His word and in having a desire to do what God tells us to be obedient to through Scriptures. We can relate this kind of fear like a child has for his parents. If the child has the right kind of fear for his parents, the child knows that his parents can discipline him if he disobeys, but overriding that fear is the knowledge that disobedience hurts the parents, and the child that loves his par-

⁵Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

ents and has respect for his parents will not want to hurt them. To put it simply, the fear of the Lord is a reverence, respect for God that causes us to what to please Him and glorify Him at all cost.

It is the Beginning of Wisdom

- “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction”
Proverbs (1:7)
- “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight”
Proverbs (9:10)
- “The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor”
Proverbs (15:33),

Observe the close connection between Wisdom and Knowledge. Both Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10 use both words Wisdom & Knowledge. Wisdom is commonly defined as good judgment or the ability to develop the best course of action in response to a given situation. In the Bible, however, Wisdom has a strong moral content. James (3:17) says (v.17) “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere”. Wisdom here is more concerned with righteous living than with judgment. Just as the fear of the Lord is the foundation of knowledge, it is also the foundation of Wisdom. Without fear of the LORD, no true Wisdom exists in an individual’s life.

Who have you been listening to?

The best way we can be sure we are not walking in the way of Folly is by finding true wisdom in the fear of the Lord. The wise will grow from correction and get used to responding to instruction. They will have an openness to receive teaching and correction, but the fool despises Wisdom and instruction. In the “Christian Counselor’s Commentary on Proverbs” by Jay Adams he states though some of the naïve will respond positively to wisdom’s gracious invitation others, who are in the process of becoming scorers (mockers), will return insults for the well – meant reproof and correction of their converted friends. Indeed, in some instances, they may even become physical about it this is seen in (v.7)! When one recognizes that another is a scorer, he should refrain from counseling him; there is no sense in casting pearls before swine (cf. Matt 7:6). That means there are persons with whom it is futile for counselors to work. But wise people, in contrast, not only accept helpful criticism well; they profit from it (v.9).

Five Kinds of Fools

In the book “Practicing Proverbs wise living for foolish times” by Richard Mayhue he tells us that Scriptures defines five kinds of fools and asserts that every living person is a fool of some kind. Take a careful look at your life. What kind of fool are you?

First fool**(Ps 14:1; 53:1).**

This person announces, “There is no God,” and blatantly denies the existence of God. He/she is the Madelyn Murray O’Hare, or the Robert Ingersoll (1833-1899) of days past. The infamous agnostic one day publicly shook his fist at God and demanded, “If you are real, strike me dead, and I give you thirty seconds to do it.” Then, he arrogantly got his watch out and timed God. At the end of 30 seconds, he looked skyward and he said, “God, You don’t exist.”

I do not know to whom he was speaking, and neither did he. Ingersoll’s logic proved to be problematic because, if God did not exist, he was addressing no one. With this illogical challenge, he evidenced an even greater personal problem. He was a fool, according to the Word of God, because the fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.”

Second Fool**(1 Cor 1:18)**

The second fool rejects the cross of Christ. “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” The world bulges with religions that absolutely reject the reality of the cross, and even deny it’s historical existence. Christ’s death represents the furthest thing from their minds when they think of having a right relationship with God, much less his resurrection. Paul concludes this to be foolishness because these people will utterly perish.

Third Fool**(Matt 7:26-27)**

The third fool disobeys God’s Word with respect to salvation. This person when asked, “Do you believe in a living God?” might say, “Sure I do, don’t you?” Literally hundreds of thousands of people, even millions, in the world will glibly affirm the existence of God and the reality of the cross, but are still going to hell because they base their salvation on something other than Christ’s substitutionary death. Matthew (7:24-27) contrasts the wise and the foolish builders. Violent and destructive storms came on both of them; one house stood the other fell. Why? Because the foolish builder failed to follow the clear Word of God with respect to salvation, but the wise builder obeyed.

Fourth Fool**(Luke 24:25)**

The fourth fool fails to believe all of God’s Word. The resurrected Christ, while walking on the road to Emmaus, met up with two disciples pouring out their hearts in grief that the Christ has been crucified, and that their hopes of him being Messiah were dashed. Jesus appropriately responded to these dear men, distraught over his death, and doubting his promised resurrection. “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!” You are also fools, like them, if you fail to believe and appropriate all that the prophets have written.

Fifth Fool**(1 Cor 4:10)**

In distinct contrast to the previous kinds of fools, only this variation receives God’s commendation. This fool lives life wholeheartedly for Christ’s sake. Paul announced to the Corinthians, “We are fools for Christ’s sake.” If you want to be

a fool, this is the kind to be. Be a fool for Christ's sake. Being this kind of fool always causes God's wisdom to manifest itself in you life. This kind of fool honors and glorifies God, seeking to please him in all things.

Ask yourself this question. When you see sin running in your life do you truly know God? A person who truly know and fears the Lord will not enter in and eat at the house of Folly. **Conclusion**

As you reflect upon you life tonight, have you been eating from Wisdom's table or Folly's table? Have you been wise and growing from correction and conforming your life in response to instruction. Have you been open to receiving teaching and correction?

Let me plead with you tonight to pursue Wisdom for the sake of your own happiness all her paths are pleasant she's more profitable then gold sweeter than honey. Wisdom has prepared a banquet she's calling out, come to my house come be filled and rejoice with me and be satisfied.

Both Wisdom and Folly have a house, both Wisdom and Folly prepares a banquet. Wisdom's house is built on sever pillars and She has carefully prepared a banquet that will lead to life, where in the basement of Folly's house is a banquet in the grave.

James 4:14 is a verse that I think about almost everyday James tells us that our life is nothing more than a mere vapor. It is here for a time and then it is gone! We only receive one life, so we need to spend it wisely, doing the will of the Lord and preparing ourselves to meet Him when this life is over. Even as you sit here tonight, the vapor of your life is dissipating into the thin air of eternity. If you were honest, would you say, "I am living a life based on the word and will of God! I walk in the fear of the Lord and I serve Him with all my heart."? Or, would you have to admit, I go my own way, do my own thing and never think about what God wants from my life

I would like to close with a quote from Charles Bridges commentary on this passage. The wisdom of God and the great deceiver of man - stand before you. Both are wooing your heart, one for life the other for death. Which voice arrest your ear and allures your heart? Which feast excites your appetite? Whose guest are you? Will you not open your eyes to the infatuation and pollution of this house of horror and death? Oh! Remember that every listening to the voice of folly rivets your chain rejoices your grand enemy, and cheats you out of your happiness.

May our Father keep you from the hands of the tempter snare, by keeping you closely walking with Christ waiting daily at the doorpost of Wisdom.