
The Invitation of Lady Wisdom and Woman Folly

Proverbs 9:1-18

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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 Wisdom's 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. They 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 let's 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.¹ 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.² 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 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

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

²Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

the remainder of the book points to one or both of these paths and/or their consequences.³

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 parents 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.

³Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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 scorner, 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.

Conclusion

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.

As you reflect upon your 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 than 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 seven 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.