

FPFWC Christian Development



Wisdom In Proverbs
June 2020

Spring Quarter

June 20, 2020

Lesson #3 – Receive Wisdom’s Gifts

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Proverbs 8:8-14, 17-21

Key Verse: Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.—Proverbs 8:10, 11

ICE BREAKERS

1. How does having wisdom benefit your life?

LESSON BACKGROUND

Wisdom was highly valued in the ancient Near East. Most nations had wise men who held high rank in government because of their skill (examples: Exodus 7:11; 1 Kings 4:30, 31, 34; Jeremiah 18:18; Daniel 1:19, 20). The Old Testament mentions wise women as well (examples: 2 Samuel 14:2; 20:16). The people who filled these positions in government and society were considered exceptional in wisdom.

Wisdom such as that found within the book of Proverbs is not limited to a specialized class of people. It is intended for everyone to live by and practice, regardless of their social status. Proverbs describes four animals that are said to be “exceeding wise” (Proverbs 30:24-28). These are not exceedingly brainy creatures, but they do have skills in practical areas of living that help them survive and thrive. The wisdom God has provided in Scripture helps us do the same. Thus, wisdom is far more than intellectual prowess. This practical knowledge guides as we navigate through life in this broken, sinful world—by instructing us how to act, speak, and respond in a wide variety of situations.

Today's lesson from Proverbs continues the appeal to follow the path of wisdom that is grounded in the fear of the Lord. The principles are found in the introductory nine chapters of the book (see Lesson Context in lesson 1). In these chapters, Wisdom is personified thrice as a woman and pictured as making her own appeal (see Proverbs 1:20-22 and commentary on lesson 1; 8:4-36, partially included in today's lesson text; 9:4-6 and commentary on lesson 4). Wisdom's foil is the seductive woman who can be referred to as Folly, whose tempting words lead to disaster.

Wisdom is described again as calling out and raising her voice (Proverbs 8:1; see 1:22-33). And as was the case in Proverbs 1:21, Wisdom is positioned at prominent, public locations so that her cry cannot be missed (8:2, 3).

LESSON COMMENTARY

Here, Lady Wisdom describes the characteristics of her words, to which all would be well advised to **listen**. Her words are **noble** and **right** (v. 6) because she speaks the **truth** and considers **wickedness** an **abomination** (v. 7). Rather than being **crooked or perverted**, **all her utterances** are spoken **in righteousness** (v. 8). And they resonate with the

discerning and knowledgeable (Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 270) who find them **straightforward** and **right** (v. 9). After all, one's attitude toward wisdom reflects whether or not one is wise.

8:10-11. Lady Wisdom tells her listeners how valuable her **instruction** is. She may be widely accessible, but she is by no means cheap (Garrett, *Proverbs*, 107). She is more valuable than **silver**, the **choicest gold**, or **jewels** (vv. 10-11a). Indeed, her worth is incomparable, worth more than **all material things** one might consider **desirable** (v. 11b).

c. Wisdom's Autobiography (8:12-31)

This section is the heart of Lady Wisdom's address. In essence, it is her autobiography. It serves as a tribute to wisdom, intended to motivate the reader to pursue her. It has two sections that describe Wisdom in history and before history (Waltke, *Book of Proverbs 1-15*, 393).

(1) Wisdom's Autobiography in History (8:12-21)

8:12-16. Lady Wisdom describes her characteristics. She first mentions herself, then three of her companions: **prudence**, **knowledge**, and **discretion** (v. 12). Wherever you find her, you find them (Longman, *Proverbs*, 201). Yet in her these qualities are never separated from **the fear of the LORD**, which will always **hate evil** in its various forms—**pride**, **arrogance**, **evil behavior**, and **perverted speech** (v. 13; cf. 1:7; 3:7; 16:6). True wisdom should never be confused with mere cleverness; Lady Wisdom despises the arrogant pride "to which shrewd and clever persons are especially prone" (Hubbard, *Proverbs*, 122). Wisdom is also where one can find good **counsel**, **sound wisdom**, **understanding**, and **power** (v. 14). These attributes suggest a competence that not only can discern the best course of action but has the strength of purpose to carry it out. Wisdom's qualities are particularly appropriate for statecraft. **All** those with power—**kings**, **rulers**, **princes**, **nobles**—need Lady Wisdom if they are to rule effectively and justly (vv. 15-16).

8:17-21. Lady Wisdom promises great reward to those who pursue her. She promises to **love those who love** her and to be found by **those who diligently seek** her (v. 17). She does not play hard to get with those who steadfastly pursue her (cf. *Jms* 1:5-8). And her love is rewarding. To her "lovers" she bestows **enduring** material prosperity (**riches** and **wealth**), **honor** (rather than shame), and **righteousness** (Pr 8:18). While **righteousness** could be understood simply as "prosperity," the context suggests more—a prosperity that is only "part of a far bigger whole, which will be specified in [verse] 35 as life and divine favour" (Kidner, *Proverbs*, 78). Hence, what she produces (her **fruit** and **yield**) is more valuable than **pure gold** and the **choicest silver** (v. 19). While they do prosper materially, her lovers are not crass materialists seeking ill-gotten gain. After all, if they accompany her, they too will **walk in the way of righteousness** and **justice** (v. 20). In return, she grants them **wealth** and abundant treasure that probably includes much more than material prosperity, which alone never quite satisfies (Hubbard, *Proverbs*, 124). Thus, Lady Wisdom is presented here as a "majestic patron and benefactor" who "moves in the most esteemed circles, among the rich and the powerful" and the righteous. She is, in fact, "an intimate of God himself," comparable to a "darling" daughter (Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 278-279).

LESSON NUGGET – Do you love wisdom? Wisdom says, “I love those who love me. Love wisdom rather than wealth, for wisdom enriches you for eternity. To love wisdom is to love Christ, and when you love Christ, you live for Him.

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary; Wiersbe Bible Commentary; and Standard Sunday School lesson.