

FPFWC Christian Development



Wisdom In Proverbs
June 2020

Spring Quarter

June 27, 2020

Lesson #4 – Feast with Wisdom

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Proverbs 9:1-6; 8-10; 13-18

KeyVerse-Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.—Proverbs 9:6

ICE BREAKERS

1. What is one specific lifestyle change you can make to reduce the “noise” that interferes with your hearing Wisdom's call?
2. Which Scriptures do you find most helpful in strengthening your resolve to make wisely measured decisions? Why?

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today's lesson concludes our studies from the book of Proverbs. It is drawn from the final chapter in the opening section of Proverbs (chapters 1-9), in which Wisdom (personified as a woman; see Lesson Context in lesson 3) presents her case for being embraced—and followed as a way of life—by the hearer or reader (see Proverbs 9). From Proverbs 10 on, the book consists primarily of brief sayings and statements of advice covering a wide range of topics, often contrasting the life of wisdom with the life of folly.

LESSON COMMENTARY –

Lady Wisdom's Banquet Invitation (9:1-6)

9:1-3. These verses describe Wisdom's preparation for her banquet. She **has built her house**, which has **seven pillars** (v. 1). Her house may suggest the imagery of a temple, a place to come worship the Lord (so Hubbard, *Proverbs*, 133), but also indicates a large, solid house, the grand mansion of a wealthy, noble lady, with plenty of room for lots of guests. In addition, she personally and meticulously arranges the feast itself, which is extravagant and delightful (v. 2). So she **prepared her food**—or more precisely, “arranged a slaughter” (Koehler et al., *HALOT*, 368)—that involved butchering and cooking meat, a luxury in the ancient world appropriate for feasts; she **mixed her wine** with honey and spices to taste good; and she **set her table** for her guests' enjoyment (Longman, *Proverbs*, 216-17). Furthermore, she aggressively and publicly issues an invitation to her feast (v. 3). She sends **out her maidens** to issue the invitation, but she also does so herself, probably calling out from the **tops** of the city walls (Waltke, *Book of Proverbs 1-15*, 436)—a vivid reminder that wisdom is widely available.

9:4-6. She issues her invitation directly to **whoever is naive**, those who lack **understanding** (v. 4). Though they have not yet chosen wisdom, neither have they yet been hardened in folly, so she wants to win them over, urging them to **turn** aside from their way. She then invites them to **eat** and **drink** of her banquet feast (v. 5). In doing so, she may also be inviting them to an intimate relationship with her (Longman, *Proverbs*,

217; cf. [3:18](#); [7:4](#)). In any case, her cuisine is far different from that of the wicked ([4:17](#)) and foolish ([9:17-18](#)). For her food is life-giving ([v. 6](#)). But it is also costly, for its participant must **forsake** folly and commit himself to continuing **in the way of understanding**. God's banquets are always so ([Isa 55:1](#); [Lk 14:15-24](#); [Jn 6:41-59](#)).

b. Interlude ([9:7-12](#))

This collection of wisdom sayings between the two parallel invitations of Wisdom and Folly may at first seem out place both in style and even in substance. However, this interlude actually fits the context as it displays the stark contrast between those who have chosen wisdom and those who have chosen folly. The choice between Wisdom and Folly is not "an isolated, impulsive decision"; it "is seen ripening into character and so into destiny" (Kidner, *Proverbs*, 82).

9:7-9. Ostensibly, these verses seem directed to wise teachers regarding whom they should instruct, but they are really less about teachers and more about the students. The **scoffer** is really the worse kind of fool, "so full of himself and contemptuous of others that he will not humble himself under any authority, not even under that of the Lord" (Waltke, *Book of Proverbs 1-15*, 140). The last thing he wants is constructive criticism. So anyone who **corrects** the mocker should expect **insults** and abuse from him ([v. 7](#)). A wise teacher should therefore choose his students carefully ([v. 8](#); Hubbard, *Proverbs*, 135). On the one hand, it is a waste of time to **reprove a scoffer** because **he** will only **hate you** all the more for trying to correct him; he is not teachable. On the other hand, a **wise man** actually **will love you** for doing so. He will appreciate you because you are helping him to **increase his learning** and become **still wiser** ([v. 9](#)). This is a reminder that a truly wise person is humble and teachable because he knows that he is always in process. He is also **righteous**, as the next verse makes clear.

9:10. Reiterating the theme verse of Proverbs, this verse shows the inextricable connection between wisdom and worship (see [1:7](#)). **The fear of the LORD** is here equated with **the knowledge of the Holy One**. Those who worship and know the Lord submit to His authority and consequently grow in wisdom and righteousness.

9:11-12. There are consequences to heeding Wisdom—or not. "The righteous course is in fact the prudent course" (Kidner, *Proverbs*, 83). Essentially, Wisdom brings **life** ([v. 11](#); cf. [3:2](#); [4:10](#); for more on life and death, see Introduction: Themes). The words **by me** make this clear, and they may also suggest that personified Wisdom has been speaking the whole time (from [vv. 5-12](#)). The single greatest beneficiary of a person's choosing wisdom is the person himself ([v. 12a](#)). But all this also implies what becomes more explicit below, that folly brings death. And so the scoffer, who blatantly rejects wisdom, has no one to blame but himself, for he **alone will bear** folly's fruit ([v. 12b](#)). While one's choices might affect others (e.g., [10:1](#)), "the ultimate gainer or loser is the man himself" (Kidner, *Proverbs*, 83).

c. Woman Folly's Banquet Invitation ([9:13-18](#))

9:13-15. Lady Wisdom's rival is here introduced, and **the woman of folly** does not fare well in the comparison. Folly is, however, just like the adulteress in chap. 7. She is a **boisterous**, gullible ignoramus ([v. 13](#)). She may have much to say to the naïve, but what she says demonstrates that she is just as clueless as they are. Unlike Lady Wisdom's diligent preparations for her feast, Woman Folly does not even bother to get up; she just

sits at the doorway of her house (v. 14a). But her laziness does not mitigate her bombast. Her **seat by the high places of the city** is probably a kind of public throne (v. 14b). "The pretentious imposter presents herself as an empress who rules a city, and the gullible bow to her authority" (Waltke, *Book of Proverbs 1-15*, 444). Alternately, she may be pictured as a kind of pagan priestess lounging outside her temple (so Hubbard, *Proverbs*, 173). In any case, she is in reality little more than a prostitute selling herself in public. **Calling to** passersby who are minding their business with no intention of going astray, she hopes to waylay the gullible among them (v. 15).

9:16-17. She directs her invitation to the **naïve**, the one **who lacks understanding** and does not know better (v. 16). She is vying for the attention of the same audience as Lady Wisdom. But her appeal is base and tawdry. True, **water** and **bread** can hardly compare to the sumptuous feast offered by Lady Wisdom, but Woman Folly still claims her meal is **sweet** and **pleasant** (v. 17). Her offer of **stolen water** likely refers to an adulterous sexual liaison (cf. 5:15-18; 7:18). Her offer of **secret** bread may also have adulterous overtones (cf. 30:20), or it may refer to illicit schemes for profiting at other's expense (Garrett, *Proverbs*, 116; cf. 1:11-14; 4:14-17). But Folly's seductiveness "applies to illicit gratifications of all sorts" (Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 303)—alluring precisely because they are forbidden.

9:18. Adam and Eve discovered death as the consequence of illicit gratification; so too the simpleton who succumbs to Woman Folly. Hers is the dinner of the **dead**, held in the hall of the grave (**Sheol**). But the simpleton's ignorance is not bliss, because he will join **her** dead **guests** at the banquet.

This section of Proverbs therefore closes with a sharp choice, particularly proposed to the young and naïve. They can either choose the Lord, Wisdom and her blessings, and ultimately, life. Or they can choose Folly, evil, and finally death. It is either one or the other. The remainder of the book is for those who have chosen well.

LESSON NUGGET – Come and dine! You see two houses and hear two invitations. Wisdom offers you a banquet of bread, meat and wine: folly offers you stolen bread and water. Wisdom promises you life, but if you eat at folly's table, you will die. Which house will you enter?

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