

# **PRACTICAL WISDOM IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS**

by Paul G. Apple, April 2005

## **THE PATHWAY TO SUCCESS IN EVERYDAY LIVING REQUIRES PURSUING THE PRACTICAL WISDOM OF THE LORD AMIDST THE DISTRACTIONS OF A SEDUCTIVE WORLD**

*“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,  
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”*  
(Proverbs 9:10)

For each section in the Book of Proverbs:

- Thesis statement ... to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline ... to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions ... to encourage life application
- Representative quotations ... to stimulate deeper insight

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Paul Apple, 304 N. Beechwood Ave., Baltimore MD 21228.

[webmaster@bibleoutlines.com](mailto:webmaster@bibleoutlines.com)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul majored in English at Princeton University and graduated with a Master of Divinity degree from Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, IN in 1979. He lives in the Baltimore area with his wife. His family is actively involved in local Christian ministries.



# THE PATHWAY TO SUCCESS IN EVERYDAY LIVING REQUIRES PURSUING THE PRACTICAL WISDOM OF THE LORD AMIDST THE DISTRACTIONS OF A SEDUCTIVE WORLD

TEXT: Proverbs 1: 1-33

TITLE: *THE FUNDAMENTALS: STEP ONE ON THE PATHWAY TO WISDOM*

**BIG IDEA**:  
**THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM**

## **I. (:1-7) INTRODUCTION: NUGGETS OF TRUTH FOR WISE LIVING**

A. (:1a) Catchy Genre of Proverbs

*“These are the proverbs” = “nuggets of truth”*

Definition:

B. (:1b) Consummate Author

*“of King Solomon of Israel, David’s son”*

C. (:2-6) Comprehensive Purpose Statement

1. Overall Purpose: Wise Living

*“He wrote them to teach his people how to live – how to act in every circumstance, for he wanted them to be understanding, just and fair in everything they did.”*

**Swindoll**: Wisdom is the ability to view life as God perceives it

**Kolkebec**: Instruction (Education enforced by Loving Discipline)

1. In Wise Behavior - Prosper concept,  
wisdom bringing success.
2. In Righteousness - God's ethical Moral Standard.  
Form of - to be straight.
3. In Justice - Proper Government: Process of God

2. Specific Emphasis for Different Groups

a. Protection for the Naïve

*“I want to make the simple-minded wise!”*

b. Tips for Teenagers

*“I want to warn young men about some problems they will face.”*

c. Leadership Training for the Mature

*“I want those already wise to become the wiser and become leaders by exploring the depths of meaning in these nuggets of truth.”*

D. (:7a) Complex Fundamental Question

*“How does a man become wise?”*

E. (:7b) Fundamental Step One: Complete Submission to Divine Instruction

*“The first step is to trust and reverence the Lord! Only fools refuse to be taught.”*

Fundamental Problem: Refusal to be taught

**Kidner:** *The beginning* (i.e. the first and controlling principle, rather than a stage which one leaves behind; cf. Ec. 12:13) is not merely a right method of thought but a right relation; a worshipping submission (*fear*) to the God of the covenant, who has revealed Himself by name (*the Lord*, i.e. *Yahweh*: Ex. 3:13-15). *Knowledge*, then, in its full sense, is a relationship, dependent on revelation and inseparable from character.

**Oxford:** In this context, it (*“the fear of the Lord”*) means a penitential turning from sin. *“The fear of the Lord is to hate evil”* (8:13). The Bible calls this repentance. We can never know God and hang on to our sins at one and the same time. But to know God, we must also trust Him. This calls for a reverential trusting in God. . .

The second part of our text reveals the barrier to the knowledge of God. The word *“fools”* describes the unrepentant mindset that despises divine wisdom and instruction... synonymous with a wicked person. He or she aggressively flouts personal independence from God and His commandments.

## **II. (:8-19) DISCERNING BETWEEN GOOD AND BAD INFLUENCES**

A. (:8-9) Fundamental Training Ground: Follow the Good Influence of Parents

*“Listen to your father and mother. What you learn from them will stand you in good stead; it will gain you many honors.”*

**Piper:** God ordained the family not just to be fruitful and fill the earth with people, but to fill the earth with instructed people and taught people. The family is the place where the next generation is born and where the next generation learns how to live.

B. (:10-19) Avoid the Bad Influence of Wayward Peer Group

1, (:10-14) Their Lawless Enticement

*“If young toughs tell you, ‘Come and join us’ – turn your back on them! We’ll hide and rob and kill,’ they say. ‘Good or bad; we’ll treat them all alike. And the loot we’ll get! All kinds of stuff! Come on, throw in your lot with us; we’ll split with you in equal shares.’”*

**Deffinbaugh:** What evil men offer:

- Group acceptance and identity

- Promise of material gain
- Excitement and sense of power

2. (:15-17) Their Naïve Expectations

*“Don’t do it son! Stay far from men like that, for crime is their way of life, and murder is their specialty. When a bird sees a trap being set, it stays away”*

3. (:18-19) Their Violent End

*“but not these men; they trap themselves! They lay a booby trap for their own lives. Such is the fate of all who live by violence and murder. They will die a violent death.”*

**Deffinbaugh:** Regarding Violence

- Natural inclination towards violence
- Violence is Attractive
- Violence is a Way of Live

**III. (:20-33) FOLLY OF REJECTING THE PATH OF WISDOM**

A. (:20-28) Wisdom Spurned Despite Its Availability

1. (:20-21) Access to Wisdom Available to All

a. Available to the General Public

*“Wisdom shouts in the streets for a hearing. She calls out to the crowds along Main Street”*

b. Available to the Political and Judicial Leaders

*“and to the judges in their courts”*

c. Available Nationally

*“and to everyone in all the land”*

2. (:22-25) Foolishness Closes Its Eyes to Wisdom Until It is Too Late

a. (“22) Failure to Face Reality

*“‘You simpletons!’ she cries. ‘How long will you go on being fools? How long will you scoff at wisdom and fight the facts.’”*

**Plaut:** Three types of people are exhorted by wisdom:

- 1) The thoughtless . . . a character weakness is involved.
- 2) The scorers. The *letz* lives by tearing others down; he is derisive because derision builds up his ego.
- 3) The fools. . . morally deficient. Intellectually, he is capable of understanding right and wrong, but he hates to learn how to make right decisions and manages to get himself into trouble.

b. (:23-24) Failure to Respond to Importunity (persistent solicitation)  
*“Come here and listen to me! I’ll pour out the spirit of wisdom upon you, and make you wise. I have called you so often but still you won’t come. I have pleaded, but all in vain.”*

c. (:25) Failure to Repent in Time  
*“For you have spurned my counsel and reproof.”*

3. (:26-28) Wisdom Will Reject the Belated Appeals of Desperate Foolishness  
*“Some day you’ll be in trouble, and I’ll mock you! When a storm of terror surrounds you, and when you are engulfed by anguish and distress, then I will not answer your cry for help. It will be too late though you search for me ever so anxiously.”*

**Plaut:** The verse (:28) portrays a common human weakness: we wait until it is all but too late, and then we cry for help and expect it right away.”

**B. (:29-33) Bitter Fruit of Rejecting Wisdom**

1. (:29-30) You Have No One to Blame But Yourself

*“For you closed your eyes to the facts and did not choose to reverence and trust the Lord, and you turned your back on me, spurning my advice.”*

2. (:31-32) Fools Get What they Asked For

*“That is why you must eat the bitter fruit of having your own way, and experience the full terrors of the pathway you have chosen. For you turned away from me – to death; your own complacency will kill you. Fools!”*

3. (:33) Fundamental Promise: It Doesn’t Have to Be This Way

*“But all who listen to me shall live in peace and safety, unafraid.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Why are proverbs an especially effective form of communication? Have we emphasized the memorization of proverbs for our children?
- 2) Trace the personification of wisdom throughout these opening chapters (even into chapter 8). How does Christ become wisdom and righteousness to us?
- 3) What facts are typically ignored by fools? Where do we tend to deny reality in our own lives?

4) What are the characteristics of one who listens and submits to divine instruction as opposed to one who ignores and rejects it?

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### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Stedman:** The book of Proverbs expresses the conclusion of the will of man. Together, the books of Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes give us the cry of the soul of man. In Psalms you have the emotional nature, which is one part of the soul function. Ecclesiastes deals with the function of the mind – the search of man's reason throughout the earth, analyzing, evaluating, weighing and concluding on the basis of what is discoverable under the sun, that is, by human reason. But in the book of Proverbs we have the appeal to the will of man and the conclusion of the will; therefore, this book is all about the things man should decide, the choices of life. This is beautifully set before us in the introduction to the book. First, there is a title in Verse 1: . . .

And then we read the purpose of the book (Verses 2-6): . . .

In other words, this is designed for man in every division and age of his life, from childhood through youth and maturity, in order to understand what life is all about. The book of Proverbs is very practical and is recommended especially for those who are just beginning to try to solve some of the mysteries of life. Also, if you are just moving out for the first time into contact with the world and its ways and mysteries, this is an excellent book of admonition.

Verse 7 gives the key to the whole book. And, since Proverbs is the book that deals with life, this is also the key verse to all of life and is one of the greatest verses in the Bible. It states the summary and conclusion of this book: . . .

This whole book approaches life from the position that God has all the answers -- God is all-wise; God knows everything. There is nothing that is hidden from his knowledge. He understands all mysteries, sees the answer to all riddles. He sees below the surface of everything. Therefore, the beginning of wisdom is to reverence and fear God.

**Holwick:** Wisdom is a relationship, offered by God and requiring a commitment of our character. ..

II. Most people are like thermometers. (Rev. Charles Adams, Illustration #1534)

A. They reflect their surroundings.

1) At some time, or in some situation, most of us are like this.

B. Young people are especially eager to be molded by others.

1) Everyone wants to be liked. "entice" Proverbs 1:10

2) Examples of "accepting" behavior: Drugs, drinking, sex.

C. Choose what will mold you.

1) Choose friends carefully.

"A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray." Proverbs 12:26

- a) Cling to good people.
- 2) Choose spouse carefully.
  - a) Don't be unequally yoked. 2 Corinthians 6:14,17

You may end up spending a lifetime trying to change someone who doesn't want to be changed.

### III. Other people are like thermostats.

#### A. They change the temperature of their surroundings.

- 1) Takes much moral strength to change others for good.
- 2) Christians should have this ability.

#### B. Jesus set the temperature for others.

- 1) Jesus associated with "riff-raff."
  - a) Prostitutes.
  - b) Tax collectors.
  - c) Low-lives.
- 2) But Jesus brought them up to his level, not other way around.
  - a) Zacchaeus and repentance. Luke 19:7-9

#### C. Jesus' church should be able to set the temperature of others.

**Kidner:** The secondary purpose of Proverbs is to introduce the reader to a style of teaching that provokes his thought, getting under his skin by thrusts of wit, paradox, common sense and teasing symbolism, in preference to the preacher's tactic of frontal assault. . .

Re vv. 20-33 – Wisdom's impassioned appeal

This passage is the first of many in which wisdom is personified; the most far-reaching of these is chapter 8. Here the open proclamation, heard above the noise of the market, significantly balances the domesticity of verse 8, to make it clear that the offer of wisdom is to the man in the street, and for the business of living, not to an elite for the pursuit of scholarship.

**Longman:** Wisdom is the skill of living. It is a practical knowledge that helps one know how to act and how to speak in different situations. Wisdom entails the ability to avoid problems, and the skill to handle them when they present themselves. Wisdom also includes the ability to interpret other people's speech and writing in order to react correctly to what they are saying to us.

Wisdom is not intelligence pure and simple. It does not necessarily exclude intelligence, but that is not the focus. Proverbs itself attributes wisdom to a series of animals, not because they have great intelligence but because they know how to navigate life well (Prov. 30:24-28).

**Deffinbaugh:** Proverbs chapter 1 is like a road map in that it outlines life in terms of only two ways--the way of wisdom and the way of folly. Wisdom leads to peace and security, while the way of folly ends with death and destruction. Everyone is on one of these two paths. The way of folly is characterized by evil men who seek material gain through violence. The way of wisdom is entered by fearing God and forsaking evil. . .

While an in-depth study of “the fear of the Lord” is worthwhile, let it suffice for now to point out that wisdom is personified in Proverbs. I believe that in addition to serving as a literary device this personification of wisdom prepares us for the incarnation of wisdom in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Notice the striking comparison of wisdom in Proverbs with Jesus in the Gospel of John. . .

**Goldberg:** The relation between “*the fear of the Lord*” and true wisdom is that fear is the foundation and wisdom is the superstructure for moral and spiritual maturity. . .

The people who make a habit of continually rejecting wisdom and her God will begin to “*eat the fruit of their ways*” (1:31). The New Testament sequel is that “*a man reaps what he sows*” (Galatians 6:7). The final step in rebelliousness, apostasy, and careless ease is destruction. What a fearful price to pay for the complete rejection of the gracious appeal by wisdom. Scorn or mockery, security or peace – the choice is ours.

**Falwell:** The unredeemed person never sees things from God’s point of view. He always views things from an earthly perspective. He is captured by the cosmos. He is imprisoned by the planet on which he lives. His gods are labeled “hedonism” and “immorality,” and they are all he worships. We have read again and again of the tragic deaths of actors and actresses. These pathetic figures have worshiped before a false altar of success, and have, in the end, reaped a fatal harvest. The greater catastrophe is that millions who do not enjoy a celebrity’s level of prosperity still reject the Word and wisdom of God, and move through life devoid of wisdom, security, and success.

TEXT: Proverbs 2:1-22

TITLE: STAYING ON THE PATHWAY TO WISDOM

**BIG IDEA:**  
**THE GIFT OF WISDOM FROM THE LORD  
KEEPS ONE ON THE RIGHT PATH**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**Zeisler:** . . . a series of lessons that a father is teaching his son. A godly father is with his young son, an early adolescent, we can well imagine, and with his arm around him, is talking to him about life. . .

Now this is clearly a son who is just beginning to face adult realities and to become responsible for himself. The sayings and commandments are offered as new, wisdom's treasures yet to be discovered.

**I. (2:1-5) THIS GIFT OF WISDOM MUST BE ACTIVELY PURSUED**

A. The Pursuit

1. By Hearing and Obeying

*“Every young man who listens to me and obeys my instructions . . .”*

2. By Diligently and Urgently Searching

*“searching for them as you would for lost money or hidden treasure”*

B. The Prize

1. Wisdom

a. Wisdom and Good Sense

b. Better Insight and Discernment

3. Knowledge of God Himself

a. Importance of Reverence for the Lord

b. Importance of Trusting Him

**Kidner:** With these two phrases (*the fear of the Lord . . . the knowledge of God*) verse 5 encompasses the two classic Old Testament terms for true religion – the poles of awe and intimacy.

**II. (2:6-10) THIS GIFT OF WISDOM MAKES ITS HOME AT THE CENTER OF YOUR BEING**

A. (:6a) The Root of This Gift of Wisdom

*“For the Lord grants wisdom!”*

**Kidner:** What you *find*, then (vs. 5), is what He *gives* (vs. 6); discovery and revelation are inseparable.

B. (:6b-7) The Riches of This Gift of Wisdom

*“His every word is a treasure of:”*

1. Knowledge and Understanding
2. Good Sense

C. (:7) The Recipients of This Gift of Wisdom

1. To the Godly
2. His Saints

D. (:8-9) The Resources of This Gift of Wisdom

1. Protecting Shield  
*“He is their shield, protecting them and guarding their pathway.”*

**W. A. Rees Jones:** God watches over the path His people take, both to protect them in it and to keep them in the right way.

2. Infallible Guide  
*“He shows how to distinguish right from wrong, how to find the right decision every time.”*

E. (:10) The Radiance of This Gift of Wisdom

1. Residing at the Core of Your Being  
*“For wisdom and truth will enter the very center of your being”*
2. Resonating Throughout Your Entire Person with Joy  
*“filling your life with joy.”*

### **III. (2:11-19) THIS GIFT OF WISDOM GUARDS YOUR SOUL AGAINST DESTRUCTIVE TEMPTATION**

A. (:11-15) Temptation of Depraved Companions

1. Depraved Men  
*“You will be given the sense to stay away from evil men”*
2. Depraved Manipulators  
*“who want you to be their partners in crime”*
3. Depraved Lifestyles  
*“men who turn from God’s ways to walk down dark and evil paths”*

4. Depraved Value Systems

*“and exult in doing wrong, for they thoroughly enjoy their sins.”*

5. Depraved Deeds

*“Everything they do is crooked and wrong.”*

**Kidner:** The process is that wisdom and knowledge, when they become your own way of thinking, and your acquired taste (10), will make the talk and interests of evil men alien to you (12-15).

B. (:16-19) Temptation of Seductive Prostitutes

1. Solitary Way of Escape

*“Only wisdom from the Lord can save a man”*

2. Seducing Solicitations

*“from the flattery of prostitutes”*

3. Shameless Adultery

*“these girls have abandoned their husbands and flouted the laws of God.”*

4. Stinking Sinkhole

*“Their houses lie along the road to death and hell.”*

5. Shattered Lives

*“None of these men will ever be the same again.”*

Illustration: some things can be glued back together and they are almost as good as new; remember the time Jenny was given a porcelain doll for her 5 year old birthday. Went outside to play; dropped it and it shattered; no putting that back together.

**IV. (2:20-22) THIS GIFT OF WISDOM DIFFERENTIATES BETWEEN A GOOD AND A BAD DESTINY**

A. (:20-21) The Godly Path Leads to a Life of Fulfillment

*“Follow the steps of the godly instead, and stay on the right path, for only good men enjoy life to the full”*

B. (:22) The Evil Path Leads to a Life of Futility

*“evil men lose the good things they might have had, and they themselves shall be destroyed.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What have you ever lost that was precious to you? How diligently and urgently did you search for it? How much more valuable is God's wisdom for our lives?
- 2) These are universal principles of sowing and reaping. Why do people think they can avoid the consequences of their actions and escape destruction?
- 3) Are we availing ourselves of the Lord's protection and guidance? Are we surrounding ourselves with godly counselors and models who will encourage us along the path of righteousness?
- 4) How can some societies argue that prostitution is a "victimless" crime when God declares that it destroys both parties? The argument that "What's done in Vegas, stays in Vegas" is a blatant satanic lie. The consequences of immorality follow you around.

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Zeisler:** Wisdom for Everyone

One of the things that makes the book of Proverbs such a helpful book of the Bible for us in our ministry to those who don't know the Lord is that it also touches on very real, practical issues. It puts us on the same street as the non-Christian; it talks about life as we encounter it, and we discover that not only are we ourselves helped by its wisdom, but we have something to offer those young people, neighbors or others in our lives who are interested in the things that we are. This is a book in which, as we saw last week, wisdom calls out in the streets, not in the religious community. It's a book for the world.

**Falwell:** This sermon on Proverbs 2 is divided into three points; each point comes from the first word of the new section. "IF" (verse 1) is conditional, including conditional challenges, similar to those a parent might say to a child. "If you finish your vegetables, you can watch television."

"FOR" (verse 6) is a term of reason. This word "FOR" is similar to "BECAUSE" or "WHAT." The second part of my outline deals with "what the Lord will do for those who keep His conditions."

"THEN" is the third word. It deals with results or is a summary term. First, we must keep the conditions; second, here are the reasons God wants us to obey; third, deals with results. This is what will happen to us.

### I. FIRST SECTION

#### A. WHY A FATHER USES "IF" WITH HIS SON.

God treats his believers similar to the way a father treats his son: both want the son to obey from the heart. Both want the son to learn lessons. God does not force us to obey; we have a will and God wants us to love and obey Him from the heart. If God forced us to love and worship Him, it would not be love, nor would the worship mean anything.

#### B. THREE STEPS TO WILLING OBEDIENCE.

1. FIRST STEP - SURRENDER:
2. SECOND STEP - MOVE TOWARD GOD:
3. THIRD STEP - APPLY GOD'S WORD (verse 2):

#### II. SECTION TWO

- A. FIRST REASON: WE WILL GET UNDERSTANDING
- B. SECOND REASON: GOD WILL KEEP YOU SAFE

#### III. SECTION THREE

THEN . . . WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US (verses 9-22).

- A. WHAT HAPPENS?: YOUR LIGHT GOES ON; "THEN SHALT THOU UNDERSTAND RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUDGMENT" (verse 9).
- B. WHAT HAPPENS: YOU ARE DELIVERED FROM EVIL MEN.
- C. WHAT HAPPENS: YOU ARE DELIVERED FROM THE "IMMORAL WOMAN."
- D. WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU GO INTO THE HOUSE OF THE ADULTERESS/HARLOT? (verse 18)
- E. WHAT HAPPENS: NO HOPE (verse 19).

#### CONCLUSION

- A. DWELL IN THE LAND.
- B. THE WICKED SHALL BE CUT OFF (verse 22).

**Dr. Dave Hartson:** [www.sermoncentral.com](http://www.sermoncentral.com)

(:6-8) Introduction:

I need wisdom because God chooses to use wisdom as a means to keep me safe in this world.

Vs 6-8 For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

- A. God says of all the ways He can keep me safe in this world, He has chosen wisdom as a primary means to keep me safe.
- B. He could have chosen to move people out of danger but instead He gives wisdom so Christians can move themselves out of danger. This way I keep my free choice. I am not God's robot.
- C. God says His wisdom will protect and guard me.
- D. God is going to give us five reasons why we need wisdom.

1. (:9-10) Without wisdom I will make the wrong choice and be convinced that it is the right choice.

Vs 9-10 Then you will understand what is right and just and fair- every good path...

- A. God is telling me that even with the best of intentions I will make a wrong choice without God's wisdom because
- B. God is telling us the wrong choices that we made are because we use the wrong criteria to make the choice.
- C. Wisdom puts before you the right criteria so that we can make the right choice.

2. (:11) Without wisdom, I can manage on the clear-cut issues of life. But without wisdom I will struggle with the issues that are not so clear-cut.

Vs11- Discretion will protect you and understanding will guard you.

A. People know that thou shall not murder or rob the local bank or run the city traffic light. Whether you are a Christian or not you know in your heart that you should not do those things.

B. But life has some difficult questions that are not so clear-cut. Should I take that second job even though it means I might miss church? Should I buy that thing on time because it is on sale or wait to I have the money? Should I step in to help someone or let God continue working in his or her life?

3. (:12-15) Without wisdom, I am likely to fall in with the wrong crowd because I will fall to see the warning signs that there is danger.

Vs 12-15 Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men from men whose words are perverse.

A. You teenagers listen up. You need to know God's word so that when you go out with your friends you will know which ones to be around and which ones to avoid.

B. Are you and I careful in the friendships that we develop?

4. (:16-19) Without wisdom, staying faithful to your spouse throughout the marriage will be difficult.

Vs 16-19 it will save you also from the adulteress from the wayward wife with her seductive words...

A. Let me tell you today, the fact that you wear a wedding band don't make a big difference.

B. Many people have destroyed not only themselves but also their families as result of not having the wisdom to avoid the adulteress.

C. There is something exciting about someone other than your spouse being attracted to you. But if you have wisdom you see all the problems.

5. (:20-22) Without wisdom, you fail to see that there is only one of two roads that each person travels on.

VS 20-22 Thus you will walk in the ways of good men...

A. In life there is only two paths that we have to choose from.

B. The key elements are: on one path you dwell in safety. The other path you dwell in uncertainty.

**Goldberg:** The proper regard for wisdom and of her reception leads to an encounter with God that not only includes reverential awe but also intimate experience. These two experiences seem to be opposites. How does one stand in awe before a holy God and yet be intimate with Him? How can one fellowship with God and have respect for His holiness? Yet wisdom makes this possible as another of her fruits.

**Ironside:** (Re vs 10-17) Two enemies are seen besetting the feet of the young man. Here (10-15) it is the evil man; in the next few verses, the strange woman. The evil

man is the man who walks in the pride of his heart and in independence of God. This, to the young, seems very attractive, appealing to the natural mind. But to follow the evil man is to “*leave the paths of righteousness*” and to “*walk in the ways of darkness.*” The truth of God possessing the reins will deliver from this, keeping the recipient of it from the self-willed ways of the evil one and pointing out his crooked and perverse paths.

TEXT: Proverbs 3:1-35

TITLE: WISDOM = THE PATHWAY TO MATURITY

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE CONNECTION BETWEEN WISDOM AND SPIRITUAL MATURITY INVOLVES EMBRACING THE ESSENTIAL HEART COMMITMENTS AND AVOIDING THE TRAPS THAT CONTRADICT GOD'S CHARACTER AND ENDANGER OUR PROSPERITY**

**I. (:1-12) SIX COMMITMENTS OF THE HEART ESSENTIAL TO SPIRITUAL MATURITY AND DIVINE PROSPERITY (THE POINTED DO'S AND DON'TS)**

A. (:1-2) Obey God's Law in Your Heart

1. (:1) The Pointed Exhortation

*"My son, do not forget my teaching, But let your heart keep my commandments"*

2. (:2) The Promised Blessing

*"For length of days and years of life, And peace they will add to you."*  
(What about Fidel Castro in Cuba?)

B. (:3-4) Preserve Kindness and Truth in Your Heart

1. (:3) The Pointed Exhortation

*"Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart."*

2. (:4) The Promised Blessing

*"So you will find favor and good repute In the sight of God and man."*

C. (:5-6) Trust in the Lord's Sovereign Guidance in Your Heart

1. (:5-6a) The Pointed Exhortation

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him"*

2. (:6b) The Promised Blessing

*"And He will make your paths straight."*

**Goldberg:** A sanctuary is found by *trusting* in the Lord (3:5a), and the main idea behind the word *trust* is "to cling to" or "lean upon." The wise disciple is the one who, having received a word from the Lord, accepts it and acts upon it as true. He leans hard upon God; He has cast all his hopes for the present and future upon Him. Furthermore, this trust must be an experience with the whole heart, one that is completely undivided.

D. (:7-8) Fear the Lord in Your Heart

1. (:7) The Pointed Exhortation

*“Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.”*

2. (:8) The Promised Blessing

*“It will be healing to your body, And refreshment to your bones.”*

E. (:9-10) Honor the Lord in Your Giving (in Your Heart as demonstrated with your wallet)

1. (:9) The Pointed Exhortation

*“Honor the Lord from your wealth, And from the first of all your produce”*

2. (:10) The Promised Blessing

*“So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.”*

F. (:11-12) Receive the Loving Discipline of Your Heavenly Father (in Your Heart as demonstrated in your attitude)

1. (:11) The Pointed Exhortation

*“My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord, Or loathe His reproof”*

2. (:12) The Promised Blessing

*“For whom the Lord loves He reproveth, Even as a father, the son in whom he delights.”*

**II. (:13-24) CAPSTONE OF MATURITY:  
APPRECIATING THE SUPREME VALUE OF GODLY WISDOM AND  
UNDERSTANDING**

A. (:13) Thesis: Consummate Value of Wisdom and Understanding

*“How blessed is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding”*

B. (:14-18) Value Preferred Over All Else

1. Nothing can compare in Value

a. Not Silver

*“For its profit is better than the profit of silver”*

b. Not Gold

*“And its gain than fine gold”*

c. Not Jewels

*“She is more precious than jewels”*

d. Not Anything

*“And nothing you desire compares with her”*

C. (:19-20) Value Proven as a Dynamic Change Agent in Creation

1. Impact on Creation of the Earth

*“The Lord by wisdom founded the earth”*

2. Impact on Creation of the Heavens

*“By understanding He established the heavens”*

3. Impact on Creation of the Deeps

*“By His knowledge the deeps were broken up”*

4. Impact on Creation of the Heights

*“And the skies drip with dew”*

**Ryrie:** Wisdom played a dynamic part in the creation of the universe. By it God changed chaos to order. So also wisdom can have a dynamic effect on human life.

D. (:21-24) Value Promised in Practical Everyday Experience

*“My son, let them not depart from your sight;  
Keep sound wisdom and discretion”*

1. Value of Life and Beauty

*“So they will be life to your soul, And adornment to your neck.”*

2. Value of Purposefulness and Security

*“Then you will walk in your way securely, And your foot will not  
stumble.”*

3. Value of Peace and Serenity

*“When you lie down, you will not be afraid; When you lie down, your  
sleep will be sweet.”*

**III. (:25-32) TESTS OF MATURITY: THE FOUR TRAPS TO AVOID THAT  
CONTRADICT THE CHARACTER OF GOD AND ENDANGER YOUR  
PROSPERITY**

A. (:25-26) Don't Panic in the Face of Calamity or Unjustified Attacks

A Contradiction of the Faithfulness of God – Absolute Dependence upon God

*“Do not be afraid of sudden fear,  
Nor of the onslaught of the wicked when it comes;  
For the Lord will be your confidence,  
And will keep your foot from being caught.”*

B. (:27-28) Don't Procrastinate in Doing Good to Others According to Your Ability  
A Contradiction of the Generosity of God – Rejection of Materialistic Hoarding

*“Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,  
When it is in your power to do it.  
Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Go, and come back, And tomorrow I will give it,’  
When you have it with you.”*

C. (:29-30) Don't Pervert Your Neighbor's Trust

A Contradiction of the Goodness of God – Avoidance of Exploitation / Selfishness

*“Do not devise harm against your neighbor,  
While he lives in security beside you.  
Do not contend with a man without cause,  
If he has done you no harm.”*

D. (:31-32) Don't Pursue the Path of the Wicked

A Contradiction of the Holiness of God – Desiring God and His Righteousness

*“Do not envy a man of violence,  
And do not choose any of his ways.  
For the crooked man is an abomination to the lord;  
But He is intimate with the upright.”*

**W. A. Rees Jones:** James tells us that heavenly wisdom is pure, peaceable, gentle, easily intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity, and that it has a diabolical parody whose marks are envy and strife.

### **(:33-35) CONCLUSION: CONTRAST BETWEEN RIGHTEOUS AND WICKED**

A. (:33) Contrast Between Wicked and Just

*“The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked,  
But He blesses the dwelling of the righteous.”*

B. (:34) Contrast Between Scorners and Lowly

*“Though He scoffs at the scoffers,  
Yet He gives grace to the afflicted.”*

C. (:35) Capstone: Contrast Between Wise and Fools

*“The wise will inherit honor,  
But fools display dishonor.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

1) How does God's concern for inward righteousness here and commitments of the heart parallel Christ's interpretation of God's law in the Sermon on the Mount?

2) How can you take hope for change within your own life when you look back at how God used His wisdom and understanding as powerful change agents in Creation?

3) Why would someone be tempted to envy a man of violence?

4) Do we mirror the heart of God in seeking to minister grace to the afflicted?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Preston Brown:** 10 New Year's Resolutions from the Wisest Man Who Ever Lived --  
They deal with:

1. Things to make us look better and live longer.
2. Things to make us have more.
3. Things that will help us to get along with everyone.

I call them - Longevity, Prosperity and Peace.

[www.sermoncentral.com](http://www.sermoncentral.com)

**Kidner:** Whereas chapter 2 emphasized the moral stability which grows with wisdom, chapter 3 particularly promises serenity. This is seen as the fruit of a thoroughgoing godliness, three aspects of which mark the main divisions of the chapter.

3:1-10 Glad Commitment

3:11-20 Patient Quest

The childlike trust of 1-10 is to coexist with the mature wisdom now held up before us. In this preview of the great chapter 8, wisdom is seen as a possession (often hard-won, 11, 12) which brings all else in its train (13-18) – indeed, without which the very universe would not have existed (19, 20) – and which crowns its possessor with peace (21-26).

3:21-35 Quiet Integrity

It becomes very clear that wisdom means walking with God (23, 26).

**W. A. Rees Jones:** All around him men were engaged in the all-absorbing pursuit of riches and honour. He is therefore at pains to show (13-18) that heavenly wisdom is a thing infinitely more precious than all those things that men seek after, and, indeed, holds the key to the things most desired by them (17), things which are added as a by-product of the search for wisdom.

**Goldberg:**

Some preachers today insist that the believer can have material wealth if he claims it in prayer and then works hard for it. Supposedly, God will then bless His child both materially and spiritually. This line of reasoning is faulty on two counts.

First, if the attempt is made to appropriate Old Testament truth along this line, the preacher is misinterpreting Scripture. Israel was constituted as a nation in the midst

of a sea of pagan nations, and God had certain purposes to accomplish with and through them. Material wealth was one way to attract the interest of the pagans; therefore, the Lord blessed Israel that unbelievers of other nations might inquire about the God of this favored people. The Body of Christ is not a nation; instead, it consists of individual peoples from many nations. The universal Body on earth is an organism, not an organization, and each believer must be obedient to the laws of the country wherein he or she resides. God does not deal with the church on the same basis as Israel.

Second, the Bible contains no promise of material blessings for the church. Believers living in North America in a context of political freedom enjoy material prosperity, not because there is a covenant that promises it but because God has been merciful and gracious to the peoples of the United States and Canada... In contrast, godly believers in many other parts of the world have very little material goods ... but they live joyfully. We should, therefore, avoid misappropriating Old Testament truths not present in the New Testament and thereby mislead people and pervert their faith.

TEXT: Proverbs 4:1-27

TITLE: FATHER KNOWS BEST

**BIG IDEA:**

**OBEDIENCE FROM THE HEART PRESERVES YOUR LIFE AS YOU PURSUE THE PRIORITY OF THE PATH OF WISDOM**

**(:1-4) INTRODUCTION: IMPORTANCE OF OBEYING GOD FROM THE HEART**

A. (:1) Pay Attention

*“Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father,  
And give attention that you may gain understanding.”*

B. (:2) Good Stuff

*“For I give you sound teaching;  
Do not abandon my instruction.”*

C. (:3-4) Generational Voice of Experience

*“When I was a son to my father,  
Tender and the only son in the sight of my mother,  
Then he taught me and said to me,  
‘Let your heart hold fast my words;  
Keep my commandments and live’”*

**I. (:5-9) PRIORITY OF PURSUING PATH OF WISDOM**

A. Go For It

*“Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding!  
Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.”*

B. Make it Top Priority -- Wisdom is the principal thing

*“Do not forsake her, and she will guard you;  
Love her, and she will watch over you.  
The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom;  
And with all your acquiring, get understanding.”*

C. (:8-9) Receive the Reward

*“Prize her, and she will exalt you;  
She will honor you if you embrace her.  
She will place on your head a garland of grace;  
She will present you with a crown of beauty.”*

## **II. (:10-13) PATH OF WISDOM TIED TO LONG LIFE AND SECURITY**

### A. (:10) Tied to Long Life

*“Hear, my son, and accept my sayings.  
And the years of your life will be many.”*

### B. (:11-12) Tied to Security

*“I have directed you in the way of wisdom;  
I have led you in upright paths.  
When you walk, your steps will not be impeded;  
And if you run, you will not stumble.”*

### C. (:13) Tied to Quality of Life

*“Take hold of instruction; do not let go.  
Guard her, for she is your life.”*

## **III. (:14-19) PATH OF WICKED TIED TO DARKNESS AND INSECURITY**

### A. (:14-15) Warning Against Path of Wicked

*“Do not enter the path of the wicked,  
And do not proceed in the way of evil men.  
Avoid it, do not pass by it;  
Turn away from it and pass on.”*

### B. (:16-17) Path of Wicked Characterized by Malicious Violence

*“For they cannot sleep unless they do evil;  
And they are robbed of sleep unless they make someone stumble.  
For they eat the bread of wickedness,  
And drink the wine of violence.”*

### C. (:18-19) Contrast Between Path of Righteous and Path of Wicked

#### 1. (:18) Path of Righteous – Tied to Light and Life

*“But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn,  
That shines brighter and brighter until the full day.”*

#### 2. (:19) Path of Wicked – Tied to Darkness and Insecurity

*“The way of the wicked is like darkness;  
They do not know over what they stumble.”*

**Kidner:** “the main contrast with verse 18 is between danger and constant bewilderment on the one hand, and safety and growing certainty on the other. Jeremiah 23:12 takes the imagery of verse 19 still further.

## **IV. (:20-27) STAY THE COURSE**

### A. (:20-21) Pay Attention

*“My son, give attention to my words;  
Incline your ear to my sayings.  
Do not let them depart from your sight;  
Keep them in the midst of your heart.”*

B. (:22) Path of Obedience Tied to Life and Health

*“For they are life to those who find them,  
And health to all their whole body.”*

C. (:23) Condition of the Heart is Critical

*“Watch over your heart with all diligence,  
For from it flow the springs of life.”*

D. (:24) Truth and Integrity Essential

*“Put away from you a deceitful mouth,  
And put devious lips far from you.”*

E. (:25-27) Don't Get Distracted

*“Let your eyes look directly ahead,  
And let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you.  
Watch the path of your feet,  
And all your ways will be established.  
Do not turn to the right nor to the left;  
Turn your foot from evil.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Note the generational transmission of wisdom described in verses 1-3. What lessons did we learn from our parents? How are we passing wisdom down to our children?
- 2) Note the contrast between avoiding evil (in all its forms and in all its associations) and embracing wisdom. Where do you find evil to be attractive and need to set up a guard to protect your way?
- 3) What types of rewards come along with the pursuit of wisdom?
- 4) Note the emphasis on *“heart, mouth (lips), eyes and feet”* in verses 23-27. How are we presenting the members of our body to serve as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6-8) rather than allowing them to continue in sin?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Ryrie:** The wicked are unable to sleep because the day has passed without an opportunity to obtain gain from an act of violence.

**Kidner:** Re “*Concentrate*” – “The constant repetition of such a call (introducing nearly every paragraph of this section of the book) is deliberate, for a major part of godliness lies in dogged attentiveness to familiar truths. So a kind of medical inspection follows, in which one’s state of readiness in the various realms symbolized by heart, mouth, eyes and feet, comes under review.”

**W. A. Rees Jones:** Wisdom leads to life, but fundamentally wisdom originates, not in the following out of a collection of wise precepts, but in the heart, the focus of the mind and will and the fountain of action.

**Mike Turner:** Think of the heart as being the womb from which all of our actions, attitudes, ambitions and articulations are conceived. When Solomon encourages us to keep our hearts....he is saying "above all things that you keep.....keep your heart because life springs from it ! The word "Keep" is elsewhere translated preserve, observe, watchers, watchmen, and even besieged. [www.sermoncentral.com](http://www.sermoncentral.com)

**Goldberg:** These verses describe what is a lost art in our generation. Wisdom provides the picture of a devout home where the father sits in the midst of his children and teaches them the ways of God. This portrait contrasts with the scene of varied interests in the average home today, where regular Bible reading is hardly practiced, and prayer around the family altar is unknown.

**Lane:** There is little fresh material in this chapter. After the riches of chapter 3 is there any more to say about *wisdom*? But what it lacks in content it makes up for in fervour. The father or teacher is desperate to gain the attention of his hearers and to elicit a response. So he goes out of his way to share with us the surpassing excellence of wisdom.

We can take this in two ways: (1) as the Lord calling on us to give our best attention to the wisdom of his Word as we read it ourselves or hear it proclaimed; (2) as an example of how we should teach our children or pupils: with a fervent desire they should hear and respond, and with the enthusiasm that what we teach them towers above anything they hear from anyone in the world. It is not all repetition and the appeal is three-fold.

A. He appeals to his own upbringing (verses 1-9).

B. He appeals to the contrast between wisdom and wickedness (verses 10-19).

C. He appeals to the basic principles of wisdom (verses 20-27).

**Bridges:** Young people are apt to plead with those who have the charge of their best interests – “What harm is there in this or that path?” Apart from other evils – this is plain. It is a contagious atmosphere. You are drinking in poison. It is far more easy to shun the occasion of sin, than the sin when the occasion presents it; to resist the

beginnings, than the progress, of sin. There must, therefore, be no tampering with it; no trial of strength, to see how far our resolutions will keep us. Let the examples of Lot (Gen. xiii. 10-13; xiv. 12), Dinah (Gen. xxxiv. 1, 2), Solomon (1 Kings, xi. 1-5), Peter (Matt. xxvi. 58, 69-74), warn us, how far only *the entrance into the path of the wicked* may carry us; lengths that we could never have contemplated in prospect without horror. It may appear an harmless outset. But how far on? The *entrance* is fatally connected with the next step onward. The frightful extent of the probability of falling might make the boldest tremble. Those at least, that know their own corruption and weakness, will shrink back, where you tread lightly. Here and there, indeed, there may be some special miracle of preservation. But no one comes out of the *path* without hurt (2 Chron. xviii. 1-3; xix. 2; xx. 35-37); and the general issue is an open door to ruin. To pretend to dread sin without fearing temptation, is self-delusion. Satan has too nearly allied them for us to separate them. The evil company is love, then the company of the evil. To pray "*not to be led into temptation;*" yet not to "*watch, that we enter not into it*" – is practically to contradict our prayers; to mock our God, by asking for what we do not heartily wish.

TEXT: Proverbs 5:1-23

TITLE: MARITAL INFIDELITY WILL DESTROY YOU

**BIG IDEA:**

**AVOID THE PATH OF SEXUAL TEMPTATION WHICH CANNOT ESCAPE CERTAIN DESTRUCTION**

**I. (:1-6) HONEY CAN BE BITTER –  
THE HONEY OF SEXUAL TEMPTATION LEADS TO THE BITTERNESS OF  
A DEFILED CONSCIENCE AND A DESTRUCTIVE END**

A. (:1-2) Valuable Lesson

1. (:1) Pay Attention

*“My son, give attention to my wisdom,  
Incline your ear to my understanding”*

2. (:2) Live Wisely

*“That you may observe discretion,  
And your lips may reserve knowledge.”*

B. (:3-4) Deceptive Allure -- Sweet as Honey ... But Bitter as Wormwood

1. (:3) Sweet as Honey

*“For the lips of an adulteress drip honey,  
And smoother than oil is her speech.”*

2. (:4) Bitter as Wormwood

*“But in the end she is bitter as wormwood,  
Sharp as a two-edged sword.”*

C. (:5-6) Potential for Disaster

1. (:5) Destined for Death and Destruction

*“Her feet go down to death,  
Her steps lay hold of Sheol.”*

2. (:6) Opposed to Life and Stability

*“She does not ponder the path of life;  
Her ways are unstable, she does not know it.”*

**II. (:7-14) DON'T GAMBLE WITH SEXUAL TEMPTATION –  
YOU GOT TO KNOW WHEN TO WALK AWAY ... YOU GOT TO KNOW  
WHEN TO RUN**

A. (:7) Pay Attention

*“Now then, my sons, listen to me, And do not depart from the words of my  
mouth.”*

B. (:8) Don't Flirt with Sexual Temptation

*"Keep your way far from her, And do not go near the door of her house."*

C. (:9-14) Terrible Consequences of Infidelity

1. (:9) Sacrificing Vitality and the Fullness of Life

*"Lest you give your vigor to others, And your years to the cruel one."*

2. (:10) Financial Hardship

*"Lest strangers be filled with your strength, And your hard-earned goods go to the house of an alien."*

3. (:11) Physical Dissipation

*"And you groan at your latter end, When your flesh and your body are consumed."*

4. (:12-13) Emotional Regret

*"And you say, 'How I have hated instruction! And my heart spurned reproof! And I have not listened to the voice of my teachers. Nor inclined my ear to my instructors!'"*

5. (:14) Complete Disaster and Embarrassment

*"I was almost in utter ruin in the midst of the assembly and congregation."*

**III. (:15-20) DRINK FROM YOUR OWN WELL – FINDING SEXUAL ENJOYMENT IN YOUR OWN WIFE PROTECTS THE BLESSING OF YOUR FAMILY**

A. (:15) Find Sexual Satisfaction With Your Own Wife

*"Drink water from your own cistern, And fresh water from your own well."*

B. (:16-17) Jealously Guard Your Own Wife

*"Should your springs be dispersed abroad, Streams of water in the streets? Let them be yours alone, And not for strangers with you."*

C. (:18-19) Potential for Erotic Love With Your Own Wife

*"Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth. As a loving hind and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; Be exhilarated always with her love."*

D. (:20) No Need to Look Elsewhere

*"For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress, And embrace the bosom of a foreigner?"*

#### **IV. (:21-23) NO ESCAPING GOD'S ACCOUNTABILITY – YOU CANNOT FLY UNDER THE RADAR OF GOD'S ACCOUNTABILITY**

##### A. (:21) God is Watching

*“For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, And He watches all his paths.”*

##### B. (:22) Sin is a Snare

*“His own iniquities will capture the wicked, And he will be held with the cords of his sin.”*

##### C. (:23) Foolishness is Fatal

*“He will die for lack of instruction, And in the greatness of his folly he will go astray.”*

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#### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) How well did we listen to the words of wisdom and discipline from our parents? How well do our children listen to us?
- 2) What steps do we take to avoid placing ourselves in harm's way ... to *“keep a path far from her?”*
- 3) Are you surprised by the imagery of sexual satisfaction used to describe the marriage relationship? What is the intent of this section (vv. 15-20)?
- 4) Note the terminology of bondage used to describe the snare of sexual transgression. Describe the various aspects of bondage involved.

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#### **QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Goldberg:** Wisdom points out the high price tag for immorality. An illicit life robs a person of his “best strength” and “years” (5:9). . . What a waste. We must learn that God's morals can never be thrust aside without paying the price. . . Family fidelity satisfies best . . .

**Falwell:** President Woodrow Wilson once expressed some thoughts on success that run parallel to a biblical concept. He said, “I would rather fail in a cause that someday will triumph than triumph in a cause that someday will fail.” We must be on God's side for success to have any meaning at all. Supposed success outside of God's program is in reality just failure. All thirty-one chapters of Proverbs tell how to live successfully. The theme of chapter 5 is biblical morality, or how to succeed in the moral arena.

**Kidner:** Verses 18-20 turn more explicitly to the personal love of husband and wife. The language is frankly erotic, delighting in the imagery to be found in the Song of Solomon (cf. Ct. 4: 5, 12, 15). Such an emphasis is rather rare in Scripture, simply because nature already provides it, and therefore the complementary aspects of marriage need to be stressed. But it is highly important to see sexual delight in marriage as God-given; and history confirms that when marriage is viewed chiefly as a business arrangement, not only is God's bounty misunderstood, but human passion seeks (cf. verse 20) other outlets.

**Bridges:** Ponder this chapter – ye that know not the poison and corruption of fleshly lusts. Perhaps painful experience (I Kings xi. 1-8. Eccles. vii. 26) had given the wise man wisdom and understanding. Therefore attend to it with fear and trembling. Man's own strength, the restraint of education, or self-discipline, is powerless, as the green withs to bind the giant. (Judg. xvi. 9.) Engrafted wisdom is the only effectual safeguard. This heavenly influence teaches us, both to regard discretion for the covering of our souls, and to keep knowledge for the warning of our fellow-sinners. (Chap. ii. 10, 11, 16; vi. 20, 24; vii. 1-5. Ps. xvii. 4; cxix. 9, 11).

TEXT: Proverbs 6:1-35

TITLE: FIVE WAYS TO AVOID WRECKING YOUR LIFE

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE PATH OF WISDOM WILL RECOGNIZE AND AVOID THE COMMON PITFALLS THAT ARE MAJOR LIFE WRECKERS**

**I. (:1-5) AVOID ASSUMING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANOTHER'S DEBTS**

(This would be one quick path to poverty)

A. (:1-2) Recognize the Trap of Unwise Debt

1. (:1) Trapped by Assuming Unnecessary Debt

*“My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor,  
If you have struck hands in pledge for another”*

2. (:2) Trapped by Rash Commitments

*“If you have been trapped by what you said,  
Ensnared by the words of your mouth”*

B. (:3) Seek Deliverance from the Bondage

*“then do this, my son, to free yourself,  
since you have fallen into your neighbor’s hands:  
Go and humble yourself; press your plea with your neighbor!”*

C. (:4-5) Escape with a Sense of Urgency

*“Allow no sleep to your eyes, no slumber to your eyelids.  
Free yourself, like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter,  
like a bird from the snare of the fowler.”*

**Goldberg:** The Folly of Overextended Debt: Unlimited debt is a foolishness for which Wisdom has some severe warnings. The Mosaic Covenant encouraged people to help one another, especially those who had unexpected financial difficulties. When loans were involved, no interest was to be charged (Leviticus 25:35-38). In particular, land sales were carefully regulated because the family plot of land was never to be sold. All a purchaser could buy from a needy farmer was the crop value to the next year of Jubilee, at which time the use of the land reverted back to the family who owned it (Leviticus 25:13-16).

**II. (:6-11) AVOID LAZINESS BY CHOOSING DILIGENCE**

(This would be a second quick path to poverty)

A. (:6-8) Study the Model of Diligence in Nature = the Ant

1. (:6) Model of the Ant Commended

*“Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise!”*

2. (:7) Takes Initiative Without Direct Supervision  
*“It has no commander, no overseer or ruler”*
  3. (:8) Maximizes Opportunities (vs. Procrastinating)  
*“yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.”*
- B. (:9) Shun Laziness by Rejecting the Snooze Button  
*“How long will you lie there, you sluggard?  
When will you get up from your sleep?”*  
Getting started is half the battle;  
*“just give me 5 more minutes”* = repetitive refrain
- C. (:10-11) Seize Every Opportunity –  
Because Procrastination = Stealing From Yourself  
*“A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest –  
And poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.”*

### **III. (:12-15) AVOID THE TRAP OF DECEPTIVE SCHEMERS**

- A. (:12a) Their Mask Unveiled – seeing them for who they really are
1. *“a scoundrel”*
  2. *“and villain”*
- B. (:12b-14) Their Methodology Exposed – what you see is not what you get
1. Mouth  
*“who goes about with a corrupt mouth”*
  2. Eye  
*“who winks with his eye”*
  3. Feet  
*“signals with his feet”*
  4. Fingers  
*“and motions with his fingers”*
  5. Heart  
*“who plots evil with deceit in his heart –  
He always stirs up dissension”*
- C. (:15) Their Apparent Prosperity Overturned  
*“Therefore disaster will overtake him in an instant;  
he will suddenly be destroyed – without remedy.”*

#### **IV. (:16-19) AVOID THE SEVEN PILLARS OF WICKEDNESS**

*“There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him:”*

- A. Arrogance – *“haughty eyes”*
- B. Lying – *“a lying tongue”*
- C. Murdering – *“hands that shed innocent blood”*
- D. Planning Wickedness – *“a heart that devises wicked schemes”*
- E. Executing Wickedness – *“feet that are quick to rush into evil”*
- F. Bearing False Witness – *“a false witness who pours out lies”*
- G. Capstone: Spreading Family Strife – *“and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers”*

#### **V. (:20-35) AVOID SEXUAL PROMISCUITY**

- A. (:20-24) The Foundation of Parental Guidance is Your First Line of Defense
  - 1. (:20-21) Priority of Obedience
    - “My son, keep your father’s commands and do not forsake your mother’s teaching. Bind them upon our heart forever; fasten them around your neck.”*
  - 2. (:22-23) General Benefits: Guidance / Protection / Correction
    - “When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you. For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life.”*
  - 3. (:24) Specific Benefit
    - “keeping you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of the wayward wife.”*
- B. (:25-29) Playing with Fire Will Only Get You Burned
  - 1. (:25) Don’t even start down this slippery slope
    - “Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes”*
  - 2. (:26) The Stakes are High
    - a. Poverty – Prostitute out for financial gain
      - “for the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread”*

b. Ruin – Adulteress sucks out your very life (bored with her marriage)  
*“and the adulteress preys upon your very life.”*

3. (:27-29) The Consequences are Inevitable

*“Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned?  
Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? So is  
he who sleeps with another man’s wife; no one who touches her will go  
unpunished.”*

C. (:30-35) No Amount of Money Can Bail You Out of the Consequences

1. (:30-31) Inexcusable Offense

*“Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his hunger when he is  
starving. Yet if he is caught, he must pay sevenfold, though it costs him  
all the wealth of his house.”*

2. (:32-33) Idiotic Self Destruction

*“But a man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so  
destroys himself. Blows and disgrace are his lot, and his shame will  
never be wiped away”*

3. (:34-35) Impossibility of Compensation

*“for jealousy arouses a husband’s fury, and he will show no mercy when  
he takes revenge. He will not accept any compensation; he will refuse  
the bribe, however great it is.”*

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**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Do we have any overextended debt where we need to seek an urgent remedy?
- 2) Do our work habits reflect more the diligence of the ant or the slothfulness of the sluggard?
- 3) Are we easily attracted by get-rich-schemes or other forms of deceptive advertising?
- 4) Are we surprised at the list of sins that are associated with murder? Do we have God’s heart when it comes to hating wickedness?

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**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Falwell:** Chapter 6 of Proverbs has four divisions, all giving a clear recipe for a wrecked and ruined life.

Number 1, violate scriptural principles in economics and make bad financial decisions (vv. 1-5). . .

The second division of chapter 6 concerns bad work habits (vv. 6-11). . . God says that by the sweat of your brow you will earn your bread. Part of our welfare and unemployment problem is that a lot of people are not looking for jobs. They are looking for positions!

But if you want to wreck your life, there is a third thing you can do: Have bad character (vv. 12-19).

Finally, note division 4, verses 20-35: Bad moral behavior will wreck your life.

**Goldberg:** (Re 6:24-35) -- The teacher of wisdom keeps hammering away at the theme of chastity. He is not satisfied merely mentioning the high price tag of sexual impurity or painting the picture of family fidelity in the most desirable of terms. Now he wants to also point out that the immoral person is a stupid fool.

**Kidner:** The detestable things are expressed in characteristically concrete, personal terms: the reader can almost catch the superior look and the shifty talk, and may wonder when his own hands were last employed to an innocent person's detriment. If we try to classify them, the abominations comprise one sin of attitude (17a), one of thought (18a) *imaginings*, AV, RV = *plans*, RSV), two of speech (lies unofficial, 17b, and official, 19a), two of action (17c, 18b) and one of influence (19b).

**Lane:** In fact, in our modern society we might be even less advised to take on the role of surety. In view of the exorbitant and ever-changing interest rates now attached to loans, to underwrite another's debt is to take on something open-ended. Repaying the principal is the smallest part of the matter. While we are to be generous to the needy we are not expected to commit ourselves beyond our capacity to an unknown future. We live in a society run on credit and debt, and most of us for a large part of our lives have commitments such as mortgages and hire-purchase agreements. We find it hard enough to meet these without taking on someone else's debt. We should only do so if we are quite sure of our ability to meet it should the need arise. Let us conduct our financial transactions with great care. Debt is a terrible thing.

**Bridges:** Remember, faith without diligence is slumbering delusion. Faith is the practical energy of a living faith. Always, therefore, look at sloth, not as an infirmity, but as a sin, affecting the whole man: growing upon us with unperceived power. Allow it therefore no rest, no time to root itself. Resist it in all its forms – bodily, mental, spiritual: indulgence of sleep and appetite: self-pleasing in all its subtle and plausible workings. Live by rule. Have your time strictly arranged. Be employed in early work for God. Store the mind with useful knowledge; ever reserving the first place for an industrious and prayerful study of the book of God. "*Mortify*" this baneful lust "*through the Divine Spirit*" (Rom. viii. 13); drawing all your motives from the death (Ibid. vi. 6), the life (Mark, i. 32-35), the rules of Christ. (Luke, ix. 23. Rom. xiii. 11-14.) Victory will soon declare for you; and how enriching will be the spoil!

**Bridges:** But the sin of the adulterer claims no sympathy. His plea is not the cry of hunger, but of lust; not want, but wantonness; not *the lack of bread*, but of *understanding*. (Comp. Eccles. vii. 25, 26; Jer. v. 8, 21.) He is wilfully given up to his sin. He *destroyeth his own soul*. (Lev. xx. 10. Chap. ii. 18, 19; v. 22, 23; vii. 22, 23. Eph. v. 5) *He gets a wound* – not like the soldier or the martyr for Christ – full of honour; but rankling on his conscience (Ps. xxxii. 3,4), and bringing *dishonour* and indelible *reproach* upon his name. The tremendous passions of *jealousy and rage* shut out all forgiveness. *The face* of no one who offered a *ransom* would be *accepted*. No compensation (Gen. xxxix. 19, 20. Judg. xix. 29, 30), however costly, will *content*.

TEXT: Proverbs 7:1-27

TITLE: THE SLIPPERY PATH OF SEXUAL SEDUCTION

**BIG IDEA:**

**SEXUAL SEDUCTION ATTACKS THE NAÏVE AT THEIR POINT OF VULNERABILITY AND SUCKS THEM INTO THE PATH OF DESTRUCTION**

**I. (:1-5) THE FORTIFIED DEFENSE: SEDUCTIVE ENTICEMENTS REQUIRE STRONG DEFENSES**

A. (:1-2) Life and Vitality are at Stake

*“My son, keep my words and store up my commands within you.  
Keep my commands and you will live;  
Guard my teachings as the apple of your eye.”*

B. (:3) Never Lose Sight of God’s Standards

*“Bind them on your fingers;  
Write them on the tablet of your heart.”*

C. (:4) Remain Loyal to Wisdom

*“Say to wisdom, ‘You are my sister,’  
and call understanding your kinsman.”  
Where do your loyalties lie?*

D. (:5) Seduction is Rampant

*“they will keep you from the adulteress,  
From the wayward wife with her seductive words.”*

**II. (:6-12) THE FOOLISH VULNERABILITY: ONLY THE NAÏVE PUT THEMSELVES IN HARM’S WAY**

A. (:6-9) The Naïve Fail to Avoid Temptation

1. (:6) The Wise Observe From Their Safe House

*“At the window of my house I looked out through the lattice.”*

2. (7) Character of the Naïve

*“I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men,  
a youth who lacked judgment.”*

3. (:8-9) Dangerous Conditions

*“He was going down the street near her house  
At twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in.”*

B. (:10-12) Sexual Seducers Aggressively Target Their Prey – But Can Easily Be Recognized

1. They Initiate Fraternization  
*“Then out came a woman to meet him”*
2. They Dress Seductively  
*“dressed like a prostitute”*
3. They Have a Hidden, Harmful Agenda  
*“and with crafty intent”*
4. They are the Opposite of Meekness and Sweetness  
*“She is loud and defiant”*

**Lane:** She is all mouth – plenty to say and a *loud* voice for everyone to hear (v.11). She is quite unashamed of her (presumably) lewd conversation.

5. They are Homebreakers instead of Homemakers  
*“her feet never stay at home”*
6. They Accost you everywhere you turn  
*“now in the street, now in the squares, at very corner she lurks.”*

### **III. (:13-21) THE FLATTERING PERSUASION: THE AGGRESSIVE ADULTERER PERSUADES THE VULNERABLE TO PURSUE THEIR SEXUAL FANTASIES**

- A. (:13a) Initiating Sexual Contact  
*“She took hold of him and kissed him”*
- B. (:13b-15) Stalking Her Prey  
*“and with a brazen face she said: ‘I have peace offerings at home; today I fulfilled my vows. So I came out to meet you; I looked for you and have found you!’”*
- C. (:16-17) Adorning Her Lair  
*“I have covered my bed with colored linens from Egypt, I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.”*
- D. (:18-20) Seizing the Opportunity to Portray Lust as Love  
*“Come, let’s drink deep of love till morning; let’s enjoy ourselves with love! My husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey. He took his purse filled with money and will not be home till full moon.”*
- E. (:21) Seducing Her Victim  
*“With persuasive words she led him astray; she seduced him with her smooth talk.”*

#### **IV. (:22-23) THE FATEFUL CHOICE: THE DUMB OX CANNOT DISCERN HIS COMING SLAUGHTER**

- A. (:22a) The Fateful Choice Made Impetuously  
*“All at once he followed her.”*
- B. (:22b-23) 3 Images of Entrapment with No Possibility of Escape
1. Like an Ox to the Slaughter  
*“like an ox going to the slaughter”*
  2. Like a Deer being trapped and killed  
*“like a deer stepping into a noose till an arrow pierces his liver”*
  3. Like a bird being snared and killed  
*“like a bird darting into a snare, little knowing it will cost him his life.”*

#### **V. (:24-27) THE FINAL WARNING: SEXUAL SEDUCTION HAS RUINED COUNTLESS LIVES**

- A. (:24) Urgency of Listening and Heeding the Warning  
*“Now then, my sons, listen to me; pay attention to what I say.”*
- B. (:25) Urgency of Guarding Your Heart  
*“Do not let your heart turn to her ways or stray into her paths.”*
- C. (:26-27) Surprising Multitude of Victims – Sucked in and Destroyed with No Escape  
*“Many are the victims she has brought down; her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death.”*

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#### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Do we treat the Word of the Lord casually and carelessly because we have such easy access to it? Do we flirt with danger in this area of sexual fantasy? What steps are we taking to hold tightly to the commands of the Lord in this area of sexual temptation and seduction?
- 2) How do TV and the media paint a positive picture of the seductress?
- 3) How would you contrast Love and Lust?

4) What families do we know that have been broken apart by transgression in this area? When have we ever seen positive outcomes from failure to heed the Lord's warnings in this area?

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#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Goldberg:** The teacher graphically describes her crafty plan for attracting her victim. She kisses the young man (7:13a) as if to impress him that she really cares for him. She gives him, of all the excuses, that she is really a pious woman: "*I have peace offerings at home; today I have fulfilled my vows*" (7:14). How could he refuse her by ignoring such expressions of love on a day of celebration? She has offered her peace offering (no doubt at some shrine of pagan worship), and after giving the portion that belonged to the priests, she had the rest of the meat in the house for a good meal (Leviticus 7:28-33; 15-17). Not only will the young man be able to enjoy the sexual relationship, but there will be plenty to eat as well.

**Kidner:** the tactics (13-21)

First, comes shock treatment (13); second, a circumstantial story – it is a special day, a celebration; it would be unthinkable to refuse (14). Third, flattery: he is the very one she had to find (15); fourth, sensuous appeal (16-18); fifth, reassurance (19, 20). The whole is pressed home with a flood of words. . .

Epilogue. (7:24-27) After watching the young man, we are made to see ourselves as conceivably filling the same role. The defense is threefold. First, guard your mind; you are in danger as soon as your thoughts wander in this fatal direction. Second, keep away, literally as well as in mind (25b). Third, look past her, to the casualties and *the chambers of death* (26, 27).

**Lane:** Solomon's remedy for promiscuity is to know and obey the word of God.

However out-dated and simplistic this may seem, the same is true in our age, where those being advocated – sex education, contraception, free love, etc. – have all failed. . . Series of vivid comparisons.

(a) *Keep* them as you would treasure (**v.1 – store**).

(b) *Keep* them as you would your life (**v.2a**). Obedience to God's Word is a matter of life, both its length and quality (4:20-23).

(c) *Keep* them as you would the tenderest part of your anatomy (**v.2b**), such as the pupil of the eye, which is sensitive to the slightest speck. We are to God as *the apple of his eye* (Deut. 32:10, Ps. 17:8, Zech. 2:8), so let his words be thus to us.

(d) *Keep* them as you would something precious to you personally, (**v.3a**) such as the ring on your finger, which may have monetary value, and will certainly have sentimental value.

(e) *Keep* them as you would those whom you are most fond of, like the friends whose name you cherish in *your heart* (**v.3b**).

(f) *Keep* them as you would the affection of a close relative (v.4). This means cultivating familiarity and intimacy with the Word, as if it were speaking personally to you (cf. 1:20f, 3:13-18). Keep his words like this and they will keep you from dangerous liaisons.

**Bridges:** Nor let present steadfastness, or seclusion from temptation, blind our eyes to the liability of yielding to the vilest indulgence. The eye of God discerns a far deeper corruption than appears in the outer man – such a total depravation, that even the affections, designed to be the sources of our holiest delight, become the principle and occasion of the most awful departures from the ways of purity and peace.

TEXT: Proverbs 8:1-36

TITLE: WISDOM PERSONIFIED AS PRECIOUS AND VALUABLE

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE LEGACY OF WISDOM VALIDATES ITS OFFER OF PRECIOUS AND VALUABLE COUNSEL THAT WILL YIELD BLESSING INSTEAD OF CURSING**

**I. (:1-11) THE CALL OF WISDOM**

- A. (:1-3) Universal Accessibility – not restricted to some special elite group  
*“Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights along the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand; beside the gates leading into the city, at the entrances, she cries aloud”*
- B. (:4-5) Target Audience – those who need wisdom  
*“To you, O men, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind. You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, gain understanding.”*
- C. (:6-9) Righteous Content – True and Just and Worthwhile and Right  
*“Listen, for I have worthy things to say; I open my lips to speak what is right. My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness. All the words of my mouth are just; none of them is crooked or perverse. To the discerning all of them are right; they are faultless to those who have knowledge.”*
- D. (:10-11) Surpassing Value  
*“Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.”*

**II. (:12-21) THE COMPANIONS OF WISDOM**

- A. (:12-14) Those Exercising Good Judgment
1. (:12) Positive
    - a. *prudence*
    - b. *knowledge*
    - c. *discretion*
  2. (:13) Negative – *“to fear the Lord is to hate evil”*
    - a. *“I hate pride”*
    - b. *“and arrogance”*

c. *“evil behavior”*

d. *“and perverse speech”*

3. (:14) Positive

a. *“Counsel and sound judgment are mine”*

b. *“I have understanding and power”*

B. (:15-16) Those Ruling Righteously

*“By me kings reign and rulers make laws that are just; by me princes govern, and all nobles who rule on earth.”*

C. (:17) Those Loving and Seeking Wisdom

*“I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me.”*

D. (:18-21) The Rewards of Wisdom

*“With me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity. My fruit is better than fine gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver. I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice, bestowing wealth on those who love me and making their treasuries full.”*

### **III. (:22-31) THE CO-EXISTENCE OF WISDOM WITH THE CREATIVE ACTIVITY OF GOD – THE LEGACY OF WISDOM**

A. (:22-23) Co-Existence from Eternity Past

*“The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work, before his deeds of old; I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began.”*

B. (:24-26) Co-Existence from before the Creation of Waters and Earth

*“When there were no oceans, I was given birth, when there were no springs abounding with water; before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth, before he made the earth or its fields or any of the dust of the world.”*

C. (:27-29) Co-Existence from before the Creation of Heavens and Seas

*“I was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command, and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.”*

D. (:30-31) Delighting in Partnering in God’s Creative Activity

*“Then I was the craftsman at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind.”*

#### IV. (:32-36) THE CAUTION OF WISDOM – BLESSING VS CURSING

##### A. (:32-33) Caution to Listen and Obey

*“Now then, my sons, listen to me; blessed are those who keep my ways. Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not ignore it.”*

##### B. (:34-36) Blessing vs Cursing

*“Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. For whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the Lord. But whoever fails to find me harms himself; all who hate me love death.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) If wisdom is so accessible, why do we need to seek so diligently to find her?
- 2) Are we more motivated by materialism or by seeking after wisdom?
- 3) Why is the legacy of wisdom stressed in this context?
- 4) How have we found wisdom to be linked to God’s favor and blessing and fullness of life?

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#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Zeisler:** But there is something marvelous, in contrast, about the announcement of wisdom, as we come to see the person of Christ, who established the heavens, who built the earth, who gave the sea its boundaries. The creation is filled with the wise counsel of God. Creation is inherently moral. It has meaning. Your Lord who cares deeply for you is the one who made these things. He is the one to whom we can go for help and strength, direction, and understanding. He is the one who established the world that we see.

**Lane:** This is a Glorification of the wisdom Solomon is teaching and offering, both to his hearers and to us. To encourage us to receive it we need to appreciate something of the greatness and value of Wisdom. Here is a comprehensive summary of the wisdom Solomon is imparting in his book, what we might call a eulogy of Wisdom. It rises from the initial appeal to a glorious climax in verses 22-31, and ends with the call for response (vv. 32-36).

**Kidner:** A chapter which is to soar beyond time and space, opens at street-level, to make it clear, first, that the wisdom of God is as relevant to the shopping-center (2,3) as to heaven itself (22); second, that it is available to the veriest dunce (5; cf. 1:20-33, especially 22); third, that it is active in seeking us – so that our own search, earnest as it has to be (17, 34), is a response, not an uncertain quest.

**Goldberg:** Re vs. 22

We need to understand more fully, however, what is meant when 8:22 describes wisdom as being “*brought . . . forth.*” The context suggests the clue for further information. In 8:23 wisdom declares, “*I was appointed,*” and in 8:24-25 she says twice, “*I was given birth.*” In the one instance, the emphasis is on an appointment in office, while in the other reference is made to a kind of “*birth.*” Since wisdom is linked to an eternal God, it is best to see her (1) as always existing, and then (2) appointed and brought forth for a ministry in the creation process.

TEXT: Proverbs 9:1-18

TITLE: TWO CONTRASTING INVITATIONS TO THE NAÏVE

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE RECRUITMENT OF THE NAÏVE IS THE BATTLEGROUND FOR THE SOUL WAGED BETWEEN THE WISE AND THE FOOLISH**

**I. (:1-6) THE DISCERNING INVITATION OF WISDOM TO THE NAÏVE: COME AND PARTAKE OF MY BANQUET TABLE**

A. (:1-2) Wisdom has a Lot to Offer

1. Solid Foundation

*“Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars.”*

**Lane:** Does the adulteress have a nicely-furnished house (7:16f)? Wisdom has something better, a palace or temple (v.1), with pillars, like Solomon’s temple (1 Kgs. 10:12) and palace (1 Kgs. 7:2). Pillars give a building strength and beauty. So will the word of the wise God give us strength, not sap our energy as adultery does (5:11). Its beauty is real and unfading, unlike the prostitute’s glamour, dependent on cosmetics and clothes (7:10). Seven is no doubt symbolic of completeness and perfection: God’s word is sufficient because it comes from the only wise God. It is a home where everything we need is supplied.

2. Sumptuous Feast

*“She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table.”*

B. (:3-5) Wisdom Aggressively Solicits the Naive

*“She has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city. ‘Let all who are simple come in here!’ she says to those who lack judgment, ‘Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed.’”*

C. (:6) Wisdom Leads to Life and Understanding Beyond the Gate or Repentance

*“Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding.”*

**I. (:7-12) THE POINT OF DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN THE SCOFFER AND THE WISE IS THEIR ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE FEAR OF THE LORD WHICH IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM**

DECISIONS LEAD TO DESTINIES -- **Goldberg**

A. (:7-9) Don’t Cast Pearls Before Swine

1. (:7-8a) Folly of Correcting a Mocker

a. You will be mocked

*“Whoever corrects a mocker brings on insult”*

- b. You will be abused  
     *“whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse.”*
- c. You will be hated  
     *“Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you.”*

**Bridges:** *Wisdom’s* messengers must discriminate in the proclamation of their message. If the *simple* welcome it, the *scorner and wicked* will rebel.

- 2. (:8b-9) Benefits of Correcting the Wise
  - a. He will love you  
     *“rebuke a wise man and he will love you.”*
  - b. He will grow in wisdom  
     *“Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still.”*
  - c. He will grow in understanding  
     *“teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.”*

**B. (:10-12) The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom**

- 1. (:10) Principle Stated  
     *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”*
- 2. (:11) Long Life is at Stake  
     *“For through me your days will be many, and years will be added to your life.”*
- 3. (:12) Both the Wise and the Mocker Get What They Deserve  
     *“If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer.”*

**I. (:13-18) THE SEDUCTIVE INVITATION OF FOLLY TO THE NAIVE:  
 COME AND PARTAKE OF MY SECRET PLEASURES  
 (portrayed as a prostitute)**

- A. (:13) The Fool Lacks Substance
  - 1. Shouts an Empty Message  
     *“The woman Folly is loud;”*
  - 2. Leads an Undisciplined Life  
     *“she is undisciplined”*
  - 3. Lacks any Depth of Understanding  
     *“and without knowledge.”*

B. (:14-16) The Fool Aggressively Solicits the Naive

*“She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city, calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way. ‘Let all who are simple come in here!’ she says to those who lack judgment.”*

Aggressively markets her wares; even to those who were not actively looking for seductive pleasures

C. (:17-18) Foolishness Leads to Death and Condemnation Beyond the Seductive Pleasures of the Moment

1. (:17) The Open Seduction of Temporal Pleasures

*“Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!”*

Does not hide the unlawful character of the sinful pleasures ... just appeals to the flesh to satisfy its cravings; there is something sinister and attractive about doing something naughty

2. (:18) The Hidden Reality of Death and Condemnation

*“But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of the grave.”*

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**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) How do we distinguish between the naïve who are still open to the invitation of wisdom and the mockers who are openly attacking God’s truth? How should our approach vary to these two different groups?
- 2) Why is foolishness so attractive and wisdom not automatically embraced?
- 3) What role does repentance play in your presentation of the gospel message? Why is it such a critical component?
- 4) How can we develop a sense of the fear of the Lord in our children?

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**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Goldberg:** (Re 9:7-12) – The central section of Proverbs 9 lies between two different kinds of invitations. The choice in selecting one or the other is important for every person because it leads to two different destinies. Those who respond to wisdom’s maidens and choose her gracious banquet, though lacking in understanding and moral experience, will soon see a change in themselves. They will be known as wise, because

wisdom imbues the company at her table with altogether new qualities. The wise man who sits at wisdom's banquet "*will be wiser still*" (9:9a). Here is a distinct contrast: worldly knowledge by itself tends to inflate a person's ego, making him so self-sufficient and self-reliant that he stops learning altogether. . .

Those who reject wisdom's invitation are viewed as mockers. They see no need to attend wisdom's banquet, and, upon being invited, they will offer only insult."

**Kidner:** In a strikingly symmetrical chapter the first and last six verses describe the rival feasts of wisdom and folly (note the almost identical 4 and 16), while the centrepiece (7-12) gives character-sketches of typical products of these opposing camps: the scoffer, with his closed mind, and the wise man, ever teachable and ever progressing.

**Goldberg:** Decisions Lead to Destinies (:7-12)

The choice in selecting one or the other is important for every person because it leads to two different destinies. Those who respond to wisdom's maidens and choose her gracious banquet, though lacking in understanding and moral experience, will soon see a change in themselves. They will be known as wise, because wisdom imbues the company at her table with altogether new qualities. The wise man who sits at wisdom's banquet "*will be wiser still*" (9:9a). Here is a distinct contrast: worldly knowledge by itself tends to inflate a person's ego, making him so self-sufficient and self-reliant that he stops learning altogether. . .

For guests feeding on what folly has to offer, life becomes a dismal experience and death a time of horror. Eternity will yawn open to snatch its foolish victims, and they will be separated from the Lord forever and ever. How can anyone be so blind as to choose the consequences of such a revolting invitation to partake of folly's cursed crumbs?

**David Thomas:** The tempting woman is here described: -- She is **ignorant**. "*She is simple and knoweth nothing.*" She is blind to spiritual realities and claims. She may be clever, acquainted with the way of the world, and crafty; still the great spiritual world is concealed from her. She is in the kingdom of darkness: -- She is clamorous, full of noise and exciting talk, bearing down all objections to her entreaties: -- She is **audacious**. "She sitteth at the door of her house on a seat in the high places of the city." Modesty, which is the glory of her sex, has left her. She is bold and brazen: -- She is **persuasive**. "*Whosoever is simple let him turn in hither.*" "*Stolen waters are sweet.*" This is her argument. She admits that her pleasures are wrong, and on that account the more delectable. She is a portrait of all whom the devil employs as his emissaries of evil. Mark her features, and take warning. The ministry of temptation is here presented.

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