

WISDOM'S FEAST

Bible Background – PROVERBS 9

Printed Text – PROVERBS 9: 1-6, 8-10, 13-18

9 Wisdom has built her house; she has carved its seven columns.

²She has prepared a great banquet, mixed the wines, and set the table.

³She has sent her servants to invite everyone to come. She calls out from the heights overlooking the city.

⁴“Come in with me,” she urges the simple. To those who lack good judgment, she says,

⁵“Come, eat my food, and drink the wine I have mixed.

⁶Leave your simple ways behind, and begin to live; learn to use good judgment.”

⁸So don't bother correcting mockers; they will only hate you. But correct the wise and they will love you.

⁹Instruct the wise and they will be even wiser. Teach the righteous, and they will learn even more.

¹⁰Fear of the LORD is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment.

¹³The woman named Folly is brash. She is ignorant and doesn't know it.

¹⁴She sits in her doorway on the heights overlooking the city.

¹⁵She calls out to men going by who are minding their own business.

¹⁶“Come in with me,” she urges the simple. To those who lack good judgment, she says,

¹⁷“Stolen water is refreshing; food eaten in secret tastes the best!”

¹⁸But little do they know that the dead are there. Her guests are in the depths of the grave.

-----New Living Translation

Lesson Introduction

Today's lesson from Proverbs 9 presents two major themes: that of wisdom and that of folly. These themes are personified as Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly, who both send invitations to the banquets they host at their houses. This dichotomy of ideas is presented in what is called *chiastic structure*. Simply put, this literary device helps paint a contrasting picture of the two themes—opposite choices with vastly different outcomes. And, in the middle of these two very contrasting ideas, a third idea is sometimes inserted that is further emphasized by its position. In the case of today's scripture, Wisdom and Folly are the two opposing ideas with the “Fear of the Lord” inserted (vv. 8-10) and emphasized as the beginning of all wisdom.

Background: This lesson's focus on chapter 9 concludes the entire collection of instructions and admonitions contained in Proverbs 1-9. Here, the writer makes explicit something only hinted at before: Lady Wisdom has an evil opponent in Lady Folly, and brings the two of them to a side-by-side showdown. Both women host lavish banquets, but the outcomes for the invitees are different. This portrait of the two women, each eager to attract her guests, reaffirms the benefits and gains to be won from paying attention to wisdom's teaching. Together, they show the vital importance of the choices that have to be made and the ultimate consequences that they carry.

-----*Precepts for Living*, the UMI Annual Commentary 2019-2020, p. 509.

Wisdom's Invitation to the Banquet

Proverbs 9:1-6: Verse 1 begins with a description of the house the Lady Wisdom has built herself. The use of the number seven symbolizes completeness and self-sufficiency. This implies to the reader that Wisdom's house is a lavish structure for a lavish banquet. Notice how Lady Wisdom is described as industrious and very active in her preparations. She built her house, slaughtered the animals and mixed the wine for the feast. She sent her maidservants to invite all who would come. The invitations were given in the highest or most public places. She invites those who hunger for knowledge and understanding, no matter how naïve they are. Her goal is to provide the food and drink of wisdom.

◆ *How will you stay hungry for wisdom and humbly seek it out even when you look successful?*

The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom

Proverbs 9:8-10: Fear of the Lord in this case, means reverential awe of God. This type of "fear" depends on the relationship that one has with the Lord. If the relationship with God is a positive one, that awe comes from recognition of the power and authority that God has over us. This awe of God should drive us to want to grow in godly wisdom and knowledge. Reverence for God brings submission to Him which is the beginning of living a life of wisdom.

The wise person and the scoffer receive wisdom differently. In His sermon on the Mount, Jesus stated do not give "that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" (Matthew 7:6). Those who scorn wisdom will not receive it. So it is advised to not waste time or energy on their reproof. They will reject the wise instruction given and the person who is giving it. But a person who truly wants wisdom and knows the benefit wisdom holds, will receive and welcome correction. This is also a warning as to the kind of learners we must be. To be a wise student is to be receptive, attentive and observant of wise instruction.

◆ *How do you react toward someone who gets angry after you try to give them constructive criticism?*

Folly's Invitation to the Banquet

Proverbs 9:13-18: Lady Folly stands as the complete opposite of everything offered by Lady Wisdom. Lady Wisdom invites the young and naïve to her elegant house, that she built by God's grace; Lady Folly sits in front of the door of her less than stately abode and calls the unsuspecting with seductive words to enter in. Where Lady Wisdom is industrious, generous, welcoming, and intentional; Lady Folly is loud and ignorant, calling out from her doorway to the passersby that she can lead astray. Lady Wisdom offers meat and wine that she has prepared; but Lady Folly offers stolen water and bread best eaten in secret. Young men enter into Folly's house not knowing that the dead are there. Wisdom's feast leads to life; while Folly's feast leads to death.

◆ *How could you recognize if folly tried to entice you into doing something that may lead you down the path to destruction?*

Conclusion

The Fear and Knowledge of the Lord leads us to a path of living wisely. As we study and gain more wisdom, we can share that wisdom with others. We must also value the wisdom of our elders by listening to them as they share the godly wisdom they have learned. When we are sometimes tempted to make foolish choices and decisions, we are able to repent and learn from our mistakes, then continue down the path of wisdom. Many in today's society do not make good choices as they commit harmful and hateful deeds to others. Sometimes it may feel that there are more foolish folk than there are wise. Wisdom calls. Do you accept the invitation to her feast?

Sources:

- Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation, Carol Stream, Illinois.
- Nickelson, R. L. (Ed.). (2019). Many Faces of Wisdom. *Standard Lesson Commentary*, 67 (Summer Quarter), 369-376. Standard Publishing, Colorado Springs, CO.
- Ogbonnaya, A. O. (Ed.). (2019). Wisdom. *Precepts for Living*, 22(Summer Quarter), 506–511. The Urban Ministries, Inc. Annual Commentary 2019-2020.
- Rigsby, R. O. (Ed.). (1979). The Teaching of Proverbs. *The Open Bible*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN, 583-585.

Lesson for Next Week – July 5, 2020

Wisdom's Vindication

Bible Background ◆ MATTHEW 11:1-19

Printed Text ◆ MATTHEW 11:7-19

Devotional Reading ◆ MATTHEW 10:1-14