



Lesson 4 June 27th, 2020

Wisdom's Feast

Study Scripture – Proverbs 9:1-6, 8-10, 13-18

Background Scripture – Proverbs 9

Key Verse:

"Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding."

Proverbs 9:6

INTRODUCTION

Our Study Lesson is in reality a strong emphasis warning every person to be careful how they live. A person should live not as an unwise person but as a wise person. As our Study looks at the benefits of choosing the way of wisdom and the way to live wisely, we should appreciate that it is not always so simple to accept the advantages of wisdom over folly.

To help us make the right decision our Study chapter will use as one writer calls **"creative metaphors, provocative analogies, and vivid imagery to explain its message"**.

We will therefore see in this Study Chapter some interesting metaphors where **Wisdom** is occupied with:

- Building a house
- In the process of this activity hewing out seven pillars to make sure this house is unshakable
- Then inviting the simple and those that lack understanding to come to a rich feast which has every kind of sustenance for pleasurable taste buds exciting food that one can require
- Sending out her maidens to invite everyone without exception and ensure every single person will come and enjoy themselves to the maximum.

It is important as we start to remember that it is often the desire of everyone to begin again for particular reasons. So we make for example Birthday, Wedding anniversary, or even more importantly New Year resolutions.

Our Lesson continues to remind us that you should want to start over fresh, GET better wisdom, not to repeat the follies of the past, in fact, to start on a "new diet" now.

When we want to start over again there is a beginning position and we are told by Solomon that **"The fear of the Lord is the start of wisdom"**.

For many people this is not a simple thing for its means making God's will the priority in your life, frankly the only important thing, living to please God rather than yourself, learning to hate the things of evil because God hates those things, and seeking to love the things God loves.

As Solomon introduces us to the benefits and blessings of **Wisdom** God does not simply keep His instruction on a theoretical basis but is appealing to our intellect.

God's intention then is to help us understand what He is saying in the picture of the benefits and blessings of **Wisdom** by showing us the security that **Wisdom** will bring to us. We all like to live in a house that will not fall down and so God pictures **Wisdom** as giving us precisely that.

Then since God knows we all love elaborate feasts we are attracted to that benefit of **Wisdom** which is guaranteed **to** meet all of the physical wants and desires that we have which we feel we might never be able to attain.

Then we of course like to get invitations from **Wisdom's** attractive maidens who are not seeking to seduce you but who want you to join in to show you the benefits that you would have. That will guarantee that you will come to the Feast.

Note therefore that God is dealing with real life situations and appealing to real life expectations that human beings have.

It is probably important for us to look at the language which presents **Wisdom** grammatically in the female gender. Sometimes we talk too much out of this gender depiction forgetting that there is some importance to figures of speech, genre, and grammatical gender. This will help us explain why **Wisdom** is a she. This will help us avoid drawing strange conclusions in the use of this language.

This is more important than you think for there are denominations or cults which actually distort language and use figures of speech in their own strange way to formulate their doctrines. Some groups even make a great deal about the feminine portrayal of Lady Wisdom, of Sophia, the Greek word for wisdom, and several words which include "Mother Nature" and build an entire false and unbiblical theology around these words. This distortion and misuse of language is found extensively in feminist theology and in the writings of those trying to make Nature divine. We have to have believers develop awareness of these anti-God approaches.

Note that there are on YouTube you will also find a new dangerous class of people and Entertainers called **Influencers** who propagate false ideas about God and Nature and lead young people astray because these **Influencers** have established themselves as disseminators of New Truth which is really only old Errors dressed up in New Clothing. The Church has to be particularly aware and discerning of the activities of these people and their growing influence on the young people.

One writer gives us an extremely helpful analysis and explains to us:
"Let's start with figures of speech. These, by definition, should not be taken literally. For example, "And the Lord said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground". (Genesis 4:10). Did Abel's blood actually cry out, audibly, from the ground? No. The Lord was using a figure of speech called personification, or



prosopopoeia, to help Cain understand the inescapable nature of sin. We realize that Abel's blood was inanimate, non-articulate, and in no way capable of speech-- it's "cry" is just a literary figure. We cannot formulate a doctrine that says blood actually speaks after a person dies. This may sound like common sense, but people can and do invent such teachings! We must be alert to figures of speech, because in figure, God's exact words will not equal His exact meaning.

In Proverbs 9:2 wisdom is not *literally* a woman who prepares a banquet. Wisdom is an intangible quality, but Solomon describes it as if it were an actual person-- personification, again. But why is wisdom a "she" and not a "he"?

Proverbs 8 (and 9) is poetry-- one of the many genres found in the Bible. This is important to consider, for, if we do not know *what* we are reading, we will not know *how* we should read it. A reader will always make some sense of the words, but if genre is not considered, the reader will likely miss the author's intent. For example, if we are reading *Treasure Island*, it's important to understand it as a novel, that is, a work of fiction. This understanding will prevent us seeking out the family history of Jim Hawkins as if he were a real person. When reading the Bible, if we do not understand an author's intent, then we will not understand God's intent-- which, of course, is what matters when it comes to interpreting His Word. Proverbs 8 is a specific type of poem called an encomium-- a poem of praise. Other encomia in Scripture are found in 1 Corinthians 13 (in praise of love), Hebrews 11 (in praise of faith), and Proverbs 31:10-31 (in praise of the virtuous wife) ... So, when we read that Wisdom is a "she", understand that Proverbs is heavily artistic; therefore, we are not reading a technical definition of wisdom.

Finally, let's talk about gender in language. Except for some personal pronouns, English does not use grammatical gender (classifying words as masculine, feminine, or neuter). However, the Hebrew language (in which Proverbs was written) does use grammatical gender, much like Spanish, French, and many other languages do. Herein is our problem. "She", as we understand it, is not necessarily "she" as it was intended in Hebrews.

Native English speakers are ambivalent concerning grammatical gender. We naturally think of the noun *girl* as feminine and the noun *boy* as masculine, so, when assigning pronouns to these words we use *she/her/hers* for *girl* and *he/him/his* for *boy*.

When we speak of a ship, which has no actual gender, we use neuter pronoun (*it/its*) however, these ships are often named after men (such as the U.S.S. Ronald Reagan). The name of the ship does not affect its gender.

To compound matters mariners usually refer to a ship in feminine terms: *she* is a fine ship, head *her* into port, etc. Gender is somewhat arbitrary in English usage, but this is not the case in many other languages.

In many languages (including Hebrew) most nouns have a strong gender component-- but the gender assignment is *grammatical* and does not necessarily indicate the physical gender of the object. In Spanish a guitar (*la guitarra*) is feminine, and a car (*el coche*) is masculine. This has nothing to do with literal gender. In fact, the Spanish word *masculinidad*, which means "masculinity", is a feminine noun! Therefore, when translating from Hebrew into English, we must distinguish grammatical gender from our notions of sexual gender.



In English, the word *wisdom* is grammatically neuter, but not so in Hebrew. The Hebrew word is *chokmoth*, and it is grammatically feminine. In Hebrew, it would have been natural to speak of wisdom as a “she”.

As previously mentioned, Solomon used the literary tool of personification to extol the inanimate and abstract idea of wisdom as if it were a real person. By doing so, Solomon communicated a vivid illustration of the blessings of being wise. In personifying wisdom, it was necessary to use the appropriate pronouns.....

There may be a couple other reasons why Solomon portrayed Wisdom as a “she”. In the broader context, Solomon is drawing a careful contrast between wise and foolish choices. Immediately before and after presenting Wisdom as an elegant lady, offering riches and satisfaction, Solomon presents a picture of Folly, pictured as a prostitute who promises pleasure but who delivers death (Proverbs 6:24)—7:27: 9:13-18). So, the foolishness of immorality is contrasted with the wisdom of virtue. Two parallel illustrations are used, and both involve a virtual woman ...

Solomon was not saying that women are intrinsically wiser than men-- that would be reading too much into the use of grammar. And he was definitely not referring to some type of goddess named “Wisdom” or “Sophia”.

Now you might wonder why so much detail about personification, genre, and figures of speech are included in this Study.

But it is very important for us to understand this matter so that we are not led astray by persons and cults who have misused language to create false doctrines. And believe me there are many such attempts, and many people have been led astray and fooled. One day, if the church does a serious study on Cults and their misuse of language you will be shocked at the things that are said and how language has been misused to trap the unwary, the simple, and the foolish.

We should therefore be prepared to learn instruction and apply wisdom to everything that we see, read, and hear.

THE TEXT

Verse 1. **Wisdom** has been presented as a woman with blessings and benefits. She has all these for those who listen and obey her.

She has been pictured in Proverbs 8: 22 -31 previously as partnering with God in creation. Now she is pictured as a woman who is extremely hospitable and who invites everyone to come and enjoy her hospitality.

She has built her own large, well appointed, and extremely strong and permanent, indestructible, unshakable house.



With an important use of symbolism Solomon says “she” has set up seven pillars for her magnificent house. There are many interpretations from commentators on what these seven pillars are. We will list some of them.

First, one idea is that the word ‘seven’ which is normally used to express completeness in Scripture conveys the idea that wisdom results in a complete, well furnished, well established house which lacks nothing. This is the house that **Wisdom** has built.

Second, the seven pillars are used to describe a traditional banquet pavilion and this idea fits with the invitation in Verse 6.

Third, some commentators believe that this idea is taken from the idea which describes the world as resting on seven pillars. So verse 1 is implying that wisdom is what holds up the world.

Fourth, some even say that the seven pillars of wisdom refer to the seven sections of Proverbs seen in the material stated previous to chapter 9.

Fifth, some see that this statement is symbolic of the beauty and stability of the church which has pillars such as the prophets, the apostles, and the pastors which minister of holy things as referred to in Galatians 2:9.

One writer comments about the multiplicity of the interpretations:

“There are a number of possible interpretations for what this means, depending on how literally or metaphorically one wishes to understand the text. The “house” has also been interpreted as a palace, a Temple, the cosmos itself, or even the poem contained in this passage with its repetition of seven verbs (the feast has six verbs), and the invitation to celebrate includes one, six actions, and the invitation to celebrate takes one.

In more metaphorical interpretations, the pillars have been compared to a number of things, including the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven liberal arts, or the seven churches of Revelation 1:11- 3:22. If the “house” is the cosmos, or the created order, these pillars could be the pillars of earth (cf. Psalm 75:3, 1 Samuel 2:8, and Job 9:6, 26:11) Raymond Van Leeuwen suggests that the seven could be an inner-biblical allusion to the six days of creation, plus the day of Sabbath ... A more literal interpretation of this structure as an actual house can be supported by the archaeological discoveries which have found seven pillars in the homes of wealthy patricians”.

Verse 2. The imagery now shifts so that we know how marvelous responding to this invitation will be. Her feast is sumptuous. She has gone to great trouble working like crazy to prepare this banquet to make all the simpletons, the simple, the foolish, the naïve know that she has met everything that she has promised and so will fulfill the irresistible appeal to all her guests.

One writer points out that by engaging in the very difficult job of slaughtering the meat she is clearly an efficient and extremely hard-working woman. Besides that she has mixed her wine, according to the practice of those days, with spices to make it strong and delightful. Sometimes, according to ancient practice she might have mixed her wine with water to cool down her guests who had been traveling through hot areas of the country. She has set her table with meat and wine, food that was not normally consumed by the ordinary folk. This tells us that this is a special meal available to every single person.



Verse 3. Her table has been loaded with rich foods and drinks, but she is not going to invite only the wealthy and elite. She sends out her servants to invite everyone to the Feast. She herself goes to the high places of the city where everyone can see and hear her and issues a personal invitation.

Verses 4-6. Her intention is to attract the simple, the foolish, the uncaring, those with no agenda in life, those who lacked understanding, those that have little wisdom to come in and feast at her table so that they will live and walk in understanding.

She goes to the heights so that one cannot say that others could easily see her because she was nearer to them, as compared to them. The choice must be made. She definitely wants the simple to turn into her. She wants them to forsake foolishness and forsake living a careless life.

But note that **Wisdom** is making the invitation but the simple must respond and must be willing to go to her to learn understanding. The offer is attractive for in wisdom there is ample provision and a pleasant life. This is the opposite to what Folly has to offer.

Remember therefore that **Wisdom's** house and table is a metaphor for obtaining wisdom. This table offers more than intelligence, or even common sense. It can be given to anyone who lacks it. But **Wisdom** includes technical expertise or craftsmanship as well as intellectual knowledge. See Exodus 31:6 and 35:26.

It is important to note **that the source of Wisdom is Wisdom itself.**

For Hebrews this **Wisdom** is closely connected to and is inseparable from knowledge of the Torah. We therefore see in the Psalms that God's word is sweet and is compared to honey. See Psalms 119.

Verses 8-9. **Wisdom** gives some very practical warnings. You cannot impose wisdom on those that are not willing to listen and to learn. They will not accept correction no matter how often we explain the fruits of Folly and the foolishness and death that will come from following the way of Folly.

The wicked man and the scoffer are closely connected. Trying to help any of these two would probably bring trouble and shame on you. The scoffers will hate anybody who tries to help them for they are not prepared to receive or accept anything called wisdom. One scholar defines the scoffer as:

“He is the person who will not live by wise and moral teachings and is not content to let others do so without his cynical mocking”.

That person is obviously hard and settled in godlessness. You will meet some that are against divine wisdom and will not consider it. They will attack it. They have no interest in submitting their life to wisdom. So if you persist in trying to correct those people, they will meet you with contempt and will rebuff any effort that you make. So you are advised to steer clear of them. Do not waste your time. Spend time trying to help others that are more receptive.



In contrast to those that have rejected the ways of wisdom and are only prepared to bring shame to you, you are told that we can safely rebuke a wise man or woman for they will love you for it. The wise man has a humble spirit and will receive correction for he is connected to righteousness. He wants to be in a right relationship with the Lord and therefore he would welcome it when you correct him. He has a teachable spirit and a desire to grow in godliness.

Christians therefore must be prudent and not try to do more harm than good. In witnessing one must wait for a favourable opportunity and avoid irritating people. Calling down fire and brimstone on the foolish people who reject anything you say will not necessarily help them or you. So avoid getting shame.

Verse 10. Solomon therefore now returns to the main theme that he has in mind to get across to this son of his. He repeats what he has said in Proverbs 1:7. He has to do this because one cannot properly focus on practical life without stressing that the foundation is this important principle. This start to something good rests on the relationship with the covenant keeping God. We therefore repeat this section:

***The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.***

Note that when someone uses the title the **Holy One**, he is stressing that God is “other” than you. He is referring to the sacred space, which is separate from the common, and the profane. God is really not like you but is separate and all His attributes are infused with holiness.

The starting point for wisdom is understanding that God must be regarded with awe and reverence and honoured for being the Holy, Just, and righteous Creator of all things. All things are sustained by Him. He does not want you to have “cowering or servile” fear, for He has created you and wants you to have a loving relationship with Him. He wants you to be fulfilled. He wants to be with you throughout all eternity. He wants therefore to multiply your days on Earth and in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Verses 13-18. Those that want to have their own wisdom and want to scoff would have to bear the punishment which comes to them by themselves. They are following the ways of Folly,

They do not understand that there is a foolish way that rejects **Wisdom**, the true **Wisdom** which is like a gracious woman offering great hospitality.

Folly is now personified as a loud, seductive, unwise woman seeking to deceive the simpleminded in stopping at her gate and coming into her home. She is described as boisterous, restless, unstable and she, like the simpleminded really know nothing, for her lifestyle and decisions are uninformed by the knowledge of the truth of God. She is reckless.

Verse 14. She sits right at her door, the door of her house most of the time but sometimes she sits at the highest places of the city. She has a seat there for instead of being home and



preparing lavish meals for those who she is inviting she sits at her seat for she has nothing good to offer the simpleminded.

Verses 15-16. The woman of Folly indicates that she is imitating **Wisdom** for she too addresses the simple and those who lack understanding. She is looking for victims. She will look on those that are passing by her and inviting them to turn in to her. If the simple turn in to her instead of turning to **Wisdom** who will take away his Folly so that he would become wise, his darkness will increase.

Verses 17 -18. Folly has to come up with some intriguing way of deceiving the simpleminded into stopping at her house. She explains how good it is to be bad.

She explains that when you practice transgression whatever you get is more sweet and pleasant than when you get something the right way. So she invites the simple to steal water and secret bread.

Note that this is theft. Invariably theft will lead to prison, loss of liberty, and death instead of life. But unfortunately the simple do not understand that she is really inviting him to the place where the dead are. All the guests that Folly has are headed for the grave. They go to Sheol.

CONCLUSION

Now we must be honest and admit to you that impulsive behaviour is attractive to some and this is generally based on uninformed thinking. There are people that are aimless, impulsive, thoughtless, easily excited by adventure. Sin and the adventure it presents therefore is appealing for they are outside of Christ even though they might tell you otherwise. They can easily identify with Folly for they are both described as naïve.

Unfortunately human beings are attracted by the forbidden things and are easily tempted to sample those. But sadly and inexplicably even those that have been exposed to Christ like to sample whatever is forbidden. Scripture warns that we must not open the door to the occult. But that is precisely what many do. They like to think that whenever God forbids something, they are showing their independence. They prize their so-called independence. They have their pleasure in breaking God's commands. For some they treasure the excitement that sin brings.

So we should not be so foolish to think that sin does not have its pleasures. Hebrews 11:25 tells us plainly that sin has its pleasures for a season.

Yet Scripture also tells us that the path of Folly has an end and the end is the place where the dead are to be found.

Transgressions can in fact make some things feel better. But remember that the allure of Folly is only a half truth. When Satan tempted Adam and Eve, he denied a connection between sin and death. But Satan knows otherwise.



He knows fully well that he will end in the Lake of Fire and he wants the simple and naïve ones to end up there with him.

He wants people to believe that they are not attending a funeral when they accept Folly's invitation. So he blinds their eyes so that they will attend their own funeral instead of going the proper way and attending a Feast.

So we sadly look around every city, street, community, school, Parliament and we hear the two voices of Wisdom and Folly appealing to men. More often than not they yield to the clamorous voice of Folly and they die. They do not obey the call of Wisdom and live. So we see many civilizations rising up and falling down. We see great empires arise and do great things and have great achievements and yet they fall. They simply are not really following the ways of **Wisdom**.

It is amazing how difficult it is for people to want to listen to the voice of Scripture and do what is right. It appears easier for them to practice injustice, oppressing the vulnerable, abusing those that are helpless, showing their might and power, lying, indulging in immorality and rebellion.

But we are advised and warned that the only way to discern between the two voices is to make the fear of Yahweh the central inspiration of your life.

When we answer the call of **Wisdom** we will be guided and corrected by God and we will develop a deep and intimate relationship with Him which will last us throughout all eternity.

Let us therefore echo the call of **Wisdom** to all those that we meet.

