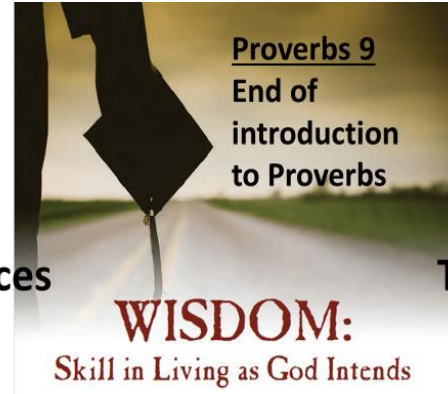


More than Surviving in a Crazy World
Two Choices, Not Three Todd Kleinhans
Proverbs 9 June 9, 2019

The first nine chapters of **Proverbs** is the introduction of the book. Solomon spends some time explaining to his son all the benefits of wisdom, and all the terrible consequences of foolishness.

Chapter 7, last week, foolishness is depicted as a wayward wife with seductive words who tries to tempt a young man into sexual sin at the cost of his life.

**Two
Choices**



**Not
Three**

Then in **Chapter 8**, we see wisdom depicted as a woman, but she speaks truth and hates wickedness. All her ways are right and just and they lead to life.

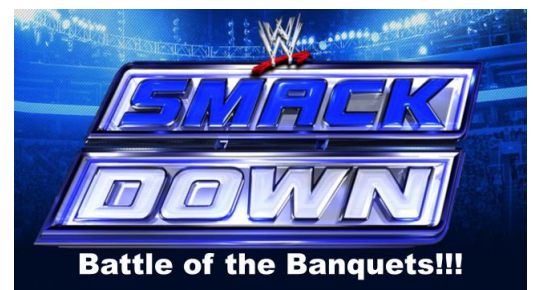
Chapter 10 begins the actual proverbs. The meat of the book. *The short lessons in this Hebrew poetic style that teach the ways of wisdom very specifically in the form of two-line, parallel sayings, i.e.:*

10:9 *The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.*

10:19 *When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.*

Now, today, we have the first eight chapters coming together into the grand finale of the introduction to Proverbs. **Chapter 9**.

It builds up to this point, where these two women are fighting it out for our attention. It's the battle of the banquets.



These aren't real women here in **chapter 9**. When you take an idea or an object and treat it like it was a person, it's called **personification**. Like, I refer to my truck as a woman. Her name is Veronica. Some days she is in a good mood and things run smoothly, but lately, she's been in a bad mood and giving me grief. Her radiator is leaking, the fuel filter is clogged. She's grumpy.

Here in **Proverbs 9**, we have **wisdom, personified as a woman, and we have the woman called folly or foolishness. Not actual physical women.**

They are both inviting us to their banquets.

Have you ever been invited to a wedding? Let's say your best friend is getting married and they have asked you to be the maid of honor, or the best man. You feel honored and write the date in your calendar, all excited, getting ready for the big event.



Then let's say your boss calls. You have been recognized by the corporate office for all your hard work and dedication and they are planning a big party in your honor where you will be presented with this prestigious award.

You look at your calendar and see that the wedding of your friend and the award ceremony are on the same day, at the same time. You can't do both. They're too far away from each other for you to attend one for a little while, then rush over for the other one. You have to choose between them.

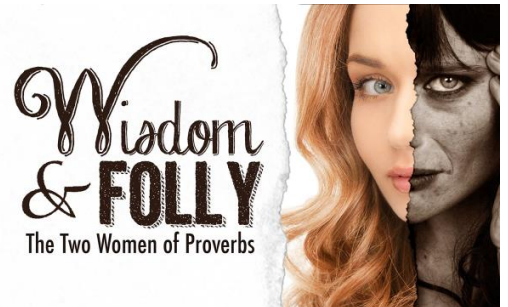
In **Proverbs 9**, we see two banquets. You have two invitations. One is given by the woman wisdom, the other by the woman foolishness. And we have to choose.

So let's look at each one and decide.

Proverbs 9:1-6 *Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars. 2 She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. 3 She*

has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city. 4 “Let all who are simple come in here!” she says to those who lack judgment. 5 “Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. 6 Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding.”

This woman has been hard at work. She is industrious. She’s put a lot of time and energy into her preparations. Her house is large and beautiful. There’s room for everyone. She has spared no expense.



In this ancient culture, it was considered a mark of prosperity if a house had pillars supporting the roof of one wall that opened up into the main courtyard. Back then, if a house had three pillars, it was considered to be the house of a rich person. It was a sign of great wealth. **Wisdom’s house had seven pillars.** Throughout scripture, the number seven is a complete number. It means perfection.

She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine. This is a fancy banquet. Animals have been slaughtered and cooked. Spices have been added to the wine to improve the taste. A lot of careful preparation has gone into this occasion. A lot of money has been spent.

She has set her table. Even to have a table back then was considered rich. Most homes didn’t have tables at that time.

She has servants who go out with invitations, asking everyone to come to her house for this great feast.

We know the invitation is for everyone because the beginning of verse 4 says, **“Let all . . .”** Not some. **Everybody is invited.**

But then it also says, **“Let all who are simple . . .”**

Now we could take this as an insult, but it’s really not. To explain this, let’s compare two verses in this chapter.

In **verse 4**, we have the **invitation of Lady Wisdom** – **“Let all who are simple come in here!”** she says to those who lack judgment.

And in **verse 16** we have the **invitation of the Woman Foolishness** – **“Let all who are simple come in here!”** She says to those who lack judgment.

The invitations are exactly the same. If there are two parties going on in two places on the same day, the host of one will invite their friends. The host of the other will invite their friends. They might have some friends in common, but likely this is meant for two different groups of people. There’s no conflict.

But here, the invitations to these two banquets are to the exact same people. Who are these people?

Those who are passing by, who are walking down the street, minding their own business. They are both described the same way, and their description sounds negative, but it isn’t necessarily. These people are not stupid. They have no mental problems. Today we would say they are simply **naïve**. They lack experience. They just don’t know any better. Maybe they are young, or maybe they just haven’t heard the gospel.

They are weak, easily led one way or another by the words and ideas of others. If something looks good over here, they walk that way. If they see something shiny or inviting over there, they go that way.

They are naïve, but they are willing to learn. They are aware of their own ignorance and are open to possibilities. The problem is, they’re open to almost any possibility. They’re naïve.

Like or not, most of us at one time or another, maybe even right now, have been part of this group.

This group represents a majority today who are searching for something. They know there’s something else out there, but they just don’t know what it is yet.

No one has come up to them and said, “Hey, I have this good news to tell you. I know the truth that you’ve been looking for. I have a message for you that will change your life forever, give you something to live for, and this is the message of eternal life. This is what you’ve been missing. Here it is!”

But there’s another aspect to foolishness as it’s used here in Proverbs. Yes, there are those who are naïve, looking for something to follow. But there are also those who are just rebels. Those who know the way they should go, but choose to do something else because they are rebellious.

So there’s a brief look at the invitation of wisdom in the first five verses of **Proverbs 9**.

Which brings us to **the second invitation**. **The woman folly, or foolishness**.

Vss. 13-18 The woman Folly [Foolishness] is loud; she is undisciplined and without knowledge. 14 She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city, 15 calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way. 16 “Let all who are simple come in here!” she says to those who lack judgment. 17 “Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!” 18 But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of the grave.



Remember the woman wisdom? She was hard-working, industrious. She built her house and had hewn out her seven pillars, prepared her meat, mixed her wine and set her table?

This woman foolishness is loud, undisciplined and without knowledge. She is not hard-working she is lazy. She has no discipline. She sits there watching people go by and extending her invitation to any who will listen.

Same audience. The simple people who lack judgment. People who are naïve and looking for something to follow.

And here's what she says, ***“Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!”***

First of all, this appears to be a much worse meal than the one offered by Lady Wisdom. Wisdom has meat and wine. The woman foolishness has water and “food.” Other translations say “bread.”

“Stolen water is sweet.” This refers to stolen pleasures. It is the same thing offered by the adulterous woman back in **chapter 7**.

7:18 “Come, let's drink deep of love till morning; let's enjoy ourselves with love!”

So what she's saying here is, “Let's do something bad, because it's fun and it feels good.”

“Food eaten in secret is delicious!” Things that are forbidden are appealing, aren't they? Nothing new here. Back in the Garden of Eden, God created everything and told Adam and Eve everything was good, but don't eat from this one tree. So what did they do?

I don't know why we're wired this way, but we see something that is forbidden and we want to go after it. But we have to do it in secret so we don't get caught, and that makes it even better. We find it exciting and intoxicating to be doing something we know we shouldn't be doing and getting away with it.

Vs. 18 – Without even realizing it, those who go to the house of foolishness are among the dead. The spiritually dead. Her guests are in the depths of the grave. In Hebrew it says they are ***“in the depths of Sheol.”*** This means Hell. Those who have chosen to be in the house of foolishness are as good as in hell, because that is where they are headed.

Everyone must make a choice. There are two options. Two invitations to two different banquets. Most people choose the easier way. It's easy to live for yourself. It's easy to hang out in the house of the woman folly and just do whatever you want and chase after temporary pleasures that lead to eternal death.

Proverbs 9:6 - Wisdom says, “Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways and walk in the way of understanding.”

Verse 6 is a beautiful picture of what **repentance** means for us today. This seems easy, but stay with me . . . **if I face this . . . and walk toward it, then I’m walking away from that _____ . Now, if I turn around and walk toward that _____, then I have turned my back on . . . and I’m not walking away from it.**

That’s repentance. When we are walking in the way of sinfulness, straight ahead, minding our own business, doing whatever feels good, going from one thing to the next without any clear direction. Something over here looks good, or something over there looks like fun.

But then, I hear these two women calling out. This woman back here, she says **stolen water is sweet. Food eaten in secret is delicious!** Do whatever feels good. Don’t worry about the consequences. You don’t have to make any decisions here, just hang out for a while. Her way leads to hell (**v. 18**).

And this woman over there says, I have worked hard to prepare this meal for you. It is rich and nourishing. **Walk in the way of understanding (v. 6). Come in here and your days will be many and years will be added to your life (v. 11). You will receive a great reward that will last for all eternity.**



There are two choices. There are not three choices. I fear most people in the world, many people in church today, think they have a third choice. They’re in limbo.

They have heard the invitations of wisdom and foolishness. But they have chosen to go both ways. Back and forth.

They know the gospel, the way of life. They know who God is and might even say they believe in Him. They say they believe in Jesus. They may be sitting in churches this morning all over the world. But they get up Monday morning and

run right back to the woman foolishness. They go out and chase after pleasure, tell lies, live secret lives, and have no fear of God.

When they get tired of that, they come back to the house of wisdom for a little while, or wander around looking for something else to do. No purpose, no direction. Where's the next party?

There are only two choices. Wisdom or foolishness. Those who think they can go back and forth between the two are friends with the woman folly. Those who think they can remain uncommitted to one or the other are actually worse off.

I'll show you. Here's what God says to those who think they can have it both ways:

Revelation 3:15-16 – “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am going to spit you out of my mouth!”

If you know the truth of the gospel and say you believe, but think you can continue following your old sinful ways, and that's ok with you, you're lukewarm. If you're not growing in the Lord as a believer, and you're not hotly pursuing wisdom and the knowledge of God through his word and in prayer, you're lukewarm. If you're not growing in your faith, you're not going anywhere spiritually. You're in trouble.

Churches are filled with complacent people. Uncommitted people. Spiritually lazy, self-serving people. Lukewarm people.

Choose the way of life. Choose to walk down that narrow path that leads to life.

Matthew 7:13-14 – “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

There is no third road mentioned here by Jesus. The road to hell is easy. The road to hell is wide, it's an eight lane highway. But the road to heaven is narrow. It's the more difficult path because it requires self-sacrifice, repentance, and a chasing after God. It's a hard road, but when you know heaven is at the end of it, it's worth it.

Which way do you choose?

Verse 10 is considered to be the theme verse of the whole book of Proverbs.

Everything from the introduction in the first 9 chapters, through the rest of the book, it all boils down to this one thing: **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”**

To fear the Lord means to recognize how awesome God is. We are in reverence, respect, awe and submission to the Creator of the universe, the sustainer of all life. Not to be afraid of Him in a bad way, but to stand in awe of his majesty, power, wisdom, justice and mercy.

It's not just a feeling, it's a way of life. Because we have this view of God, we obey him, we live to please him and give him glory through our lives.

Psalm 36 tells us that **the wicked have no fear of God.** They have no respect for who God is. They just go around doing whatever they want that makes them feel good.

So here we have two invitations to two banquets. Well, one banquet, and one . . . secret meal of stolen food.

Verse 12 makes a good conclusion. **“If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer.”**

What does that mean? **If you want to be wise,** you can choose to be wise. The invitation is open, and you will receive the blessings of wisdom. What blessings?

Everything listed in the first nine chapters of Proverbs that we've gone over.
The benefits of wisdom.

But . . .

"If you are a mocker" – this is the opposite of wisdom. This is what those in the house of foolishness do. They scoff at wisdom, they make fun of the wise.

"If you are a mocker, you alone will suffer."

Everyone of us must accept personal accountability. **You are the person you choose to be.**

**You are the person you
choose to be.**

**You have no one to
blame for who you
are, but yourself.**

Now you might say, "Well listen man, you don't understand my situation. You don't understand my parents, you don't understand my children, you don't understand my spouse, you don't understand my boss, you don't know what I've been through . . ."

I don't deny the fact that life is filled with challenges. Many of you have faced a lot of hard times.

If you're using something in your past as an excuse to put off committing your life fully to the Lord, I'd love to talk with you about that sometime.

The bottom line is this – ***You have no one to blame for who you are, but yourself.*** That's true for you and it's true for me. If you want to feast at the banquet and become wise and know the God of wisdom, you have same access to the Word of God that everyone in this room has. ***You cannot know God apart from his Word.***

We all have equal access to the Word of God. We all have equal access to God through prayer. Jesus died and rose again so that each one of us can approach God personally. Each one of us can ask God for wisdom if we really want to choose that path.

If you want wisdom, you can have it. But if I chose to continue living a life bouncing back and forth from one to the other, wandering around in limbo, not learning from my mistakes but continually making the same mistakes over and over, and if I truly don't fear the Lord but would rather do my own thing – *I can't blame anyone but myself.*

**You cannot know God
apart from his Word.**

MAKE YOUR CHOICE

Stop putting it off. Make your choice today. Don't do it half-hearted, go ALL IN.