The Book of Proverbs
Practical Wisdom for Everyday Life

Lesson 4: Chapters 8 & 9
The Way of Wisdom
or The Way of Folly
“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” (Proverbs 1:7)

Choices

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” (Proverbs 9:10)
Outline – Chapters 8 and 9

- 8:1-3  Lady Wisdom calls out
- 8:4-11  Wisdom makes her plea
- 8:12-21  Wisdom’s virtues and benefits
- 8:22-31  A majestic celebration of Wisdom in God’s creation
- 8:32-36  Wisdom’s final plea for attention
- 9:1-6  Wisdom’s invitation to the banquet
- 9:7-9  Proverbs on correction and rebuke
- 9:10-12  The foundation for Wisdom
- 9:13-18  The woman of folly
Chapter 8

- Wisdom speaks as a person
  - She makes her own appeal to the world
  - Almost every verse contains “I, my, or me”
- The Hebrew language has only two genders: masculine and feminine
  - Concepts such as righteousness, wickedness, love, truth, and law are feminine. Wisdom fits into this category.
- Only natural to personify wisdom in the Hebrew as feminine
Lady Wisdom calls out (8:1-3)

- Does wisdom call out? Yes
- Where does she call out?
  - Where she can be seen
    - On a high hill; at the busy crossroads; by the gates of the city
  - Unlike the woman of 7:12
    - “There is nothing furtive, nothing underhand, about Wisdom.” (Robert Alden)
- What is she doing?
  - Calling out for any who will listen
  - Wisdom is not hard to find if we are seeking it
    - It’s right there for all to heed
Wisdom makes her plea (8:4-11)

- Vv. 4-5
  - Who is she calling to?
    - Men, sons of men, simple ones, fools
    - The call is to all humankind
    - Seeks her disciples both from those who are learned and from those who are simple
- Vv. 6-9
  - She describes what comes from her mouth
    - Excellent things, right things, truth, not wickedness, righteousness, nothing crooked or perverse, plain things
Wisdom makes her plea (8:4-11)

• Vv. 10-11
  • Things she has to say are of significant value
  • Far surpass:
    • Silver, choice gold, rubies, anything one desires
    • None can be compared with her (wisdom)
  • Behind our human searchings after wisdom, Wisdom is searching for us
Wisdom’s virtues and benefits (8:12-21)

• Continues an elaboration of Wisdom’s virtues and the advantages of paying attention to her
• She is a close colleague of prudence, knowledge, and discretion
• She is at home with counsel and sound judgment
• Good rulers are governed by her principles
• Paying attention to her brings life-giving rewards
Wisdom’s virtues and benefits (8:12-21)

• Vv. 12-13
  • Wisdom “dwells” with – resides or permanently stays
    • Her companion: prudence
  • Finds out understanding and discretion
    • Prudence – caution with regard to practical matters; frugality
    • Understanding – comprehension; skill in dealing with or handling something
  • Discretion - ability to make responsible decisions
  • The “fear of the Lord” is brought into view again
    • In the negative: to hate evil, pride, arrogance, the evil way, and the perverse mouth
    • The things wisdom hates as well
Wisdom’s virtues and benefits (8:12-21)

• Vv. 12-13
  • The moral life and the intellectual life should be inseparable in the “fear of the Lord”
  • Have to commit yourself to this for it to take root in your life
  • Are you committed to a fear of the Lord? Are you committed to the pursuit of wisdom in your life?
    • Like riding a bike
    • Have to take the risk, make the commitment of faith, try it out
  • “We do not know many things by just collecting facts, but by committing ourselves in certain beliefs to act on those beliefs.” (David Atkinson)
Wisdom’s virtues and benefits (8:12-21)

• V. 14
  • Further defines herself as holding counsel, sound wisdom, understanding, and strength
    • Things the ruler should desire
• Vv. 15-16
  • She enables these to rule: kings, rulers, princes, nobles, judges
• V. 17
  • The relationship with wisdom is a mutual one
  • She loves the one who loves her
  • The one who diligently seeks her will find her
    • Diligently – literally, to be up early to enquire
    • Not something that just comes to us naturally
Wisdom’s virtues and benefits (8:12-21)

• All these things are put within our reach
• Not the exclusive property of princes and kings
• The riches of wisdom are free for all
• We too have the capacity to give good advice coupled with practical skill and the power to achieve it
• These abilities flow from the fear of the Lord
• They are the capacities people need to make sense of their lives and cope with life’s needs
Wisdom’s virtues and benefits (8:12-21)

• Vv. 18-21
  • Wisdom describes her many benefits:
    • Riches and honor – enduring; include righteousness
    • Her fruit and revenue are better than gold and silver
    • She walks in the ways of righteousness and the paths of justice
      • Those who make her their companion walk in these same paths
    • The result – those who love her – inherit wealth
    • Much of this intended for the future ruler
A majestic celebration of Wisdom in God’s creation (8:22-31)

- Lady Wisdom predates the creation
  - She was with the Lord from before time began
- Instrumental in bringing about the creation
- Was beside the Lord and rejoicing in the wonder of His creation
- “This paragraph, perhaps more than anywhere else in the Bible, couples the wonder of God’s creation with its excitement, exuberance, exhilaration and delight.” (David Atkinson)
A majestic celebration of Wisdom in God’s creation (8:22-31)

- Vv. 22-26
  - Learn that wisdom is eternal; with God from everlasting
  - Wisdom is an attribute of God; a part of God; God is the essence of wisdom
  - Reaffirms God’s creative power
  - He existed before all these; the instrument in creation
  - Note also, that this parallels the creation account:
    - World (v. 23) and day one
    - Water (v. 24 and day two
    - Land (vv. 25-26) and day three
A majestic celebration of Wisdom in God’s creation (8:22-31)

• Vv. 27-29
  • Wisdom: “I was there”
  • Not a more significant claim than to be able to say, “I was there when God created”
  • This is wisdom’s claim. This is wisdom’s greatness.
    • She was there
  • The world is not the result of blind chance
    • It is the creation of a benevolent God
    • The order we see is a reflection of His very nature
    • He is the very essence of Wisdom, and this is seen in His creation
A majestic celebration of Wisdom in God’s creation (8:22-31)

- Vv. 30-31
  - She says she was beside Him
    - “I was faithfully by His side”
  - Depicts the relationship between wisdom and God as a harmonious one
    - A poetic way of saying God was wise when He made the world
  - V. 31 - the climax of God’s creation
    - The creation of mankind
    - A joy for wisdom to see; this was her delight
Wisdom’s final plea for attention (8:32-36)

• Vv. 32-33
  • Mankind is the climax of God’s creation and wisdom
  • Appeal is made to His children to listen to wisdom
    • Listen to me, keep my ways, hear instruction
      • The result – be wise

• V. 34
  • Lady Wisdom
    • Wise man comes to her gates, up to her front door and sits on the steps ready to listen

• V. 35
  • The reward – will find life and favor from the Lord
Wisdom’s final plea for attention (8:32-36)

• V. 36
  • The one who refuses her … the one ignores her … the one who will not listen to her … the one who sins against her (against God) … the one who hates her:
    • Wrongs his own soul
    • Loves death
  • Come back to the two paths:
    • The two choices
    • The way of wisdom and life
      • Or, the way of folly and death
Wisdom’s invitation to the banquet (9:1-6)

• Here we see wisdom preparing for something? What is she doing?
  • She’s preparing her house for a big banquet
  • Inviting guests to come and join her
• Vv. 1-2
  • Has actually built her house just for this occasion
  • Seven pillars – perfection – sturdy and complete
  • Prepared everything needed for a great feast
• V. 3
  • She sends out her maidens to give invitations
  • They go throughout all the city
Wisdom’s invitation to the banquet (9:1-6)

• Vv. 4-6
  • Invitation extended to:
    • The simple; the ignorant
    • No prerequisite – all who are willing are invited
    • Similar to parable of wedding feast (Matt. 22:1ff)
    • Proverbs – a book available and applicable to all
  • Plea is simple:
    • Come, eat and drink; forsake foolishness and live
    • Will go in the way of understanding
    ➢ Yields the way of life that Wisdom spoke about
  • A contrast to woman of folly
    • Drew the simple in to a far different affair
Proverbs on correction and rebuke (9:7-9)

• V. 7
  • Correcting a scoffer – is this a good thing to do?
    • No – will get you argument, debate, insults, harm
    • No matter how tactful and kind, scoffer not likely to take it well
  • V. 8
    • Do not bother correcting the scoffer
    • But rebuking a wise person – to your benefit and theirs
      • Will “love you” for it
Proverbs on correction and rebuke (9:7-9)

- V. 9
  - Instructing wise makes them wiser and smarter
  - Use discretion with correction and rebuke
    - Know who will receive it well and when to give it
  - Be the wise person!
    - When offered correction, don’t accept as the scoffer
    - Learn from it; be still wiser
  - Fit well with wisdom’s appeal to all who will hear
    - Be wise and listen to what she has to say
    - Find the corrections in Proverbs and learn from them
  - Notice the fourfold pattern and positive/negative aspects
    - (7) −/− & −/− … (8) −/− & +/+ … (9) +/+ and +/+
The foundation for Wisdom (9:10-12)

• Three verses sum up the picture of Lady Wisdom
  • “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”
    • The foundation; the very basis for gaining wisdom
      • Without respect for God, true wisdom will elude you
    • When you have, will find wisdom and understanding
  • Then, what will Lady Wisdom bring to you?
    • Long life and wisdom for living
  • If you reject it, will bear it alone
  • A choice to make
    • Will you choose Lady Wisdom as your companion?
The woman of folly (9:13-18)

• Or, will you choose the woman of folly?
• What is she like?
  • Foolish; clamorous; simple; knows nothing
• What does she do?
  • She sits by her door; calls out to all who pass by
  • “Turn in here”; “stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant”
• Where does the simple man end up with her?
  • In her house (18) – a mausoleum (where the dead are)
• A choice painted
  • Two paths:
    • path of the just, way of the wicked
  • Two women:
    • Lady Wisdom, Woman of Folly
  • Can choose the way of wisdom, or the way of the fool and scoffer
• Wisdom of the father / son talks

• What will we choose?
  ➢ Take the path of the just
  ➢ Embrace wisdom