

Proverbs - Chapter 9

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Overview

All through the book of Proverbs, Solomon uses images of people, mainly in a contrasting style, to show us the difference between wisdom and foolishness.

In this chapter, wisdom and foolishness are portrayed as rival young women, each preparing a feast and inviting people in. Wisdom is portrayed here as a responsible woman of character, while foolishness is a prostitute serving food that has been stolen. We will see that wisdom appeals to the mind and the heart, while foolishness appeals to our senses (touch, feel, smell, hearing, seeing). While it is many times easier to excite our senses rather than our hearts and minds, the pleasures of foolishness are temporary. By contrast, the satisfaction that wisdom brings lasts forever.

[v.1 - v.6](#) The first verse refers to “seven pillars”. This is a figurative statement, and does not represent seven pillars of wisdom. In scripture, the number seven represents completeness and perfection. This verse is basically stating that wisdom lacks nothing – it is complete and it is perfect.

However, Selwyn Hughes came up with seven pillars on which he felt that Godly wisdom was built:

1. Trust – Firm reliance on the integrity, ability, or character of a person or thing
2. Integrity – Steadfast adherence to a strict moral or ethical code
3. Generosity – Being generous with our time, our talents, and our finances
4. Diligence – Earnest and persistent application to an undertaking; steady effort; heedfulness
5. Apples of Gold – “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” ([Proverbs 25:11](#)) – The words of our mouths
6. Community – Relationships with fellow Christians

7. Holiness – Separation to God with conduct befitting those so separated

Selwyn Hughes, "Everyday Light"

This first section is dealing with a banquet. The way it is described here has some close parallels to the banquet Jesus described in His parable ([Luke 14:15-24](#)).

In this parable, the man who was sitting with Jesus could almost see the glory of God's kingdom, but he did not understand how to be a part of it. As Jesus tells this story, he indicates that many turned down the invitation to come to the banquet because the timing was inconvenient to them. In Jesus' day, it was customary to send two invitations to a party – one to invite the guests, and one to let them know that everything was ready and prepared. The guests in this parable insulted the host by making excuses when he sent the second invitation.

To look at a further parallel in this story, in the history of Israel, God's first invitation to them came from Moses and the prophets, sent to tell about the coming Messiah. The second invitation came from His Son, Jesus, when He came to earth. The religious leaders accepted the first invitation – they believed that God had called them to be His people, but they insulted God by refusing to accept His Son. Just as the master in the parable sent his servant into the streets to invite the needy to his banquet, so God sent His Son to the whole world of needy people to tell them God's Kingdom had arrived and was ready for them.

In this parable, many people intended to go, but didn't because they got sidetracked by other activities that seemed more important at the time. We cannot afford to let anything become more important than our search for God's wisdom in our lives.

v.7 - v.12 The definition of a scorner is someone who treats others with unqualified contempt or disdain. Are we wise people or are we sometime scorners? We can usually tell by the way we handle criticism. When someone rebukes us, do we respond by trying to give them just as good as they are giving us? Or, do we listen to what is being said, and respond to it in a calm manner?

All of us have had people who have said things to us that are mean, hateful, untrue, and hurtful. Our natural response is to lash out, to try

and hurt them as much as they have hurt us. But in the end, who wins in a situation like this? No one. [Verse 8](#) speaks to this, stating that if we rebuke someone who scorns us, they will end up hating us. What we really want is to find some common ground with these people. Maybe the one scorning you is not a Christian, and it just may be your reaction to their hurtful words that show them the difference between a person with Christ in their life, and themselves.

We are all going to have critics. But instead of trying to criticize them, maybe we need to take a deep breath, listen to what they are saying, and possibly learn from it. That's hard to do, but that is the path someone who is wise will take.

In [verse 10](#), we see that the beginning of wisdom is the fear (or respect) of the Lord. We, in turn, use that respect of our Lord to learn more about Him and gain knowledge about what He expects of us. That leads us into an understanding of His ways, His expectations of us, and His standards for us to live by. And because we follow Him out of respect for His authority, His mercy, and His grace, we should want to learn more about Him, to get deeper into His word, and to follow His leading to the best of our ability.

Just as in much of Solomon's writings, he gives the benefits of seeking after Godly wisdom and he also contrasts these benefits with the consequences that result from not following God's desire for us to seek after His wisdom and apply this to our lives. Here, he states that a benefit is a longer life. This is not the first time he has made this type of statement ([Proverbs 3:1-2](#), [Proverbs 3:16](#), [Proverbs 10:27](#)).

He further states that if we are to seek after this wisdom, we should do it for ourselves, not for anyone else. To me, this seems to be a parallel to getting saved. Committing ourselves to Christ is a personal action. I cannot be saved for you, and you cannot be saved for me. We each come to a place in our lives where we either accept God's free gift of salvation or we reject it. We all have those close to us who have rejected God, and we would give everything we have for them to be saved – but we cannot. It is a personal decision, based upon a firm relationship with Jesus Christ. In many ways, wisdom is like this. It is a personal gift given to all those who seek after it. It involves study, time, patience, questions, but it all starts with a respect of the Lord. That is the personal relationship foundation that wisdom is built upon.

Solomon shows the consequences of taking the path of a scorner, rather than taking the high road of wisdom. He says that we alone will

bear the consequences of our actions. We can blame the outcome on no one other than ourselves.

[v.13 – v.18](#) There is something that is enticing about wickedness. That is why it is so dangerous. One sin that we feel “we got away with” causes us to want more. Sin somehow seems more exciting than the “boring” Christian life. That is why many people lay sound wisdom aside, even when they know better in their hearts, in order to pursue after something they know is foolish.

It’s almost like an advertisement to sin. In [v.17](#), we have sin’s advertisement to us – **“Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.”** This makes sin look good, harmless, something that we would want to engage in. We as Christians, know this is not the case.

So why do so many people listen? Because we’ve been fooled into thinking that sin has no consequences. We buy in to the lie that reaching over proper boundaries is not only acceptable, but is fun.

However, the advertiser, Satan, doesn’t give us the whole story. In [v.18](#), we find the rest of the story about this advertisement to sin. **“But he knoweth not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell.”**

The deterrent to all of this is wisdom, knowing right from wrong, having a personal relationship with Almighty God, and leaning on His promise that there will be an escape for every temptation that comes our way. And what is the beginning of wisdom that we learned in [v.10](#)? The fear or respect of the Lord.

The following chart shows a comparison in Proverbs of the lifestyles of the righteous compared with the wicked. As you will see, it makes a strong case for living by God's pattern. The advantages of righteous living and the disadvantages of wicked living are pointed out. The kind of person we decide to be will affect every area of our lives.

Righteousness and Wickedness

	Righteous	Wicked	Reference
Outlook on Life	Hopeful	Fearful	10:24
	Concerned about the welfare of God's creation	Even their kindness is cruel	12:10
	Understand justice	Don't understand justice	28:5
Response to Life	Showered with blessings	Covered with violence; plot evil	10:26 ; 16:30
	Proceed with care	Put up a bold front	21:29
	Persevere against evil	Brought down by calamity	24:15-16
	Seek out the honest	Hate the honest	29:10
How they are seen by others	Are respected	Do not endure; lead others to sin	13:15 ; 16:29
	Conduct is upright	Conduct is devious	21:8
	Are not to desire the company of godless people	Plot violence	24:1-2
	Others are glad with they succeed	Others hide when they rise to power	28:12
	Care for the poor	Unconcerned about the poor	29:7

	Despise the wicked	Despise the godly	29:27
Quality of Life	Stand firm	Swept away	10:25
	Rescued by godliness	Trapped by evil desires	11:6
	No real harm comes to them	Constant trouble is with them	12:21
	Income results in treasure	Income results in trouble	15:6
	Avoid evil	Fall into constant trouble	16:17 ; 17:20
	Are bold as lions	Are fearful constantly	28:1
	Will be safe	Will suddenly fall	28:18
Short-term results	Walk securely	Will be found out	10:9
	Chased by blessings	Chased by trouble	13:21
Long-term results	God protects them	God destroys them	10:29
	Evil people will bow to them	Will bow to the righteous	14:19
		Will be punished for their rebellion	17:11
Eternal expectations	Never uprooted	Will not remain	10:30
	Attain life	Go to death	11:19
	End only in good	End only in wrath	11:23
	Earn a sure reward	Earn deceptive wages	11:18
	Have a refuge when they die	Crushed by their sins	14:32
God's opinion of them	Delights in the good	Detests the perverse	11:20