

A Banquet or Bread and Water Proverbs 9 (May 29)

Video

Today we are invited to choose either a banquet or bread and water. Sounds simple, a **no-brainer**, but it's not that simple if you're simple.

But to understand any proverb correctly and be able to hear God speak through it, we need to read the intro to the book. It establishes the purpose of this collection of proverbs, or wisdom literature, as the video explained.

If you are new or inexperienced with the Bible, then take note. This is one of the **most important** and misunderstood verses in the Bible. **These are the proverbs of Solomon, David's son, king of Israel.**² Their purpose is to teach people wisdom and discipline, to help them understand the **insights of the wise.**³ Their purpose is to teach people to live disciplined and successful lives, to help them do what is right, just, and fair.⁴ These proverbs will give **insight to the simple, knowledge and discernment to the young.**⁵ Let the wise listen to these proverbs and become even wiser. Let those with understanding receive guidance⁶ by exploring the meaning in these proverbs and parables, the words of the wise and their riddles.⁷ Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. Prov. 1

The sayings and riddles in Proverbs are a way to interact and learn from the God of the universe. But also, through this book and in our reading today, are titles of the **people these Proverbs are written for and about.** **There are three types of people in Proverbs**

Simple. These people might be just **young and inexperienced or naïve.** They also might not be **very observant** of what is happening around them. They are **easily tricked.** They are **neither bad nor good**, they haven't yet made steps toward either of those paths. **The Proverbs and the wisdom they contained are there to help them,** not be simple, but be wise.

The next two represent at least an **initial step** in a direction. These two are clearly viewed as **having chosen a path.**

Fool or mocker. These are two of the words that are used for those who **have made initial decisions that place them** in this category. Clearly by the label you can tell that this is not a good decision or direction.

Wise. Those that are called the wise have **listened, interacted with the Proverbs** and other ways of understanding and loving God. **The wise, translated**

the wisdom into how they live and interact with others. Wisdom is not head knowledge. You can win on Jeopardy and not be wise.

Now that we have the context set, let's read Chapter 9 in Proverbs with these three categories in mind. **Wisdom has built her house; she has carved its seven columns.** ² **She has prepared a great banquet, mixed the wines, and set the table.** ³ **She 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.** ⁶ **Leave your simple ways behind, and begin to live; learn to use good judgment."** ⁷ **Anyone who rebukes a mocker will get an insult in return. Anyone who corrects the wicked will get hurt.** ⁸ **So don't bother correcting mockers; they will only hate you. But correct the wise, and they will love you.** ⁹ **Instruct the wise, and they will be even wiser. Teach the righteous, and they will learn even more.** ¹⁰ **Fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment.** ¹¹ **Wisdom will multiply your days and add years to your life.** ² **If you become wise, you will be the one to benefit. If you scorn wisdom, you will be the one to suffer.** ¹³ **The woman named Folly is brash. She is ignorant and doesn't know it.** ¹⁴ **She sits in her doorway on the heights overlooking the city.** ¹⁵ **She 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 (others translate this "bread") in secret tastes the best!"** ¹⁸ **But little do they know that the dead are there. Her guests are in the depths of the grave. Proverbs 9:1-18**

The scene can be described as a parent talking to their child as they send them off to college or military or work, or whatever. One path leads to going to class, using the library, and getting involved with Campus Crusade, Young Life, or Athletes in Action. The other leads to getting a fake ID so you can buy alcohol, experience the world of binge drinking, skipping class, and having sex, just because you can. These are two different paths with different sales pitches. This is prophetic work because it describes different paths and the places each they will take you. This kind of writing demands some imagination.

Can you imagine this awkward conversation with mom and dad after dinner, sipping coffee, and then it starts without any warning. "I remember back in the day, back when I was heading off to college. What an exciting time filled with potential and lots of decisions. (Dad inserts talk of two different paths cutting through the woods.)

Did you notice that there are two different women who are calling out to the men in the street, trying to get them to enter their establishment. There is Lady

Wisdom, making her appeal to those passing by, and there is the **woman named folly**, doing the same.

This is a **comparison and contrast** situation. **What is similar?** They are both in the **high point of the city**, the **call out to those passing by**, and the **offer of a meal**. And **both are women**. Interesting.

The differences...the invitation is different; **the meal is different**, and **the consequences of the choice** are different.

Meals...a banquet with meat versus stolen water and bread. **Doesn't seem at first glance as even a choice**.

The picture of wisdom is "self-sufficient, industrious, wealthy, and concerned about the welfare of others, particularly the hungry, simple youth." **I picture this woman having a great smile, very open** to the people who are coming, but are **dressed sensibly with comfortable shoes**. And the **entryway is brightly lit**.

Folly isn't a word we use a lot anymore. Here's what it means in the original language. It's kind of obvious, but it means "**foolishness or stupidity**." I picture this woman dressed a little more **suggestively**. Not so much as to **scare anyone away, but enough to get them thinking**. "**Don't listen too closely to the invitation, just look at her and imagine**." And this **entrance is not well lit**, but the **entry way is well worn**. A lot of men have come this way.

Right in the middle of these two descriptions is the phrase we say in Proverbs 1:10, "The Fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment." We will get to that phrase in a minute.

Here's where three types of people come into play. **The invitation from Wisdom and Folly is to the simple**. **The wise and the fool have already decided**. They must Choose between wisdom or folly. **The simple, naïve, young, are the target demographic for these two sales pitches**.

Here's where the woman of folly has a slight advantage. The **entrance is easy**, there is **no cover charge, no ID needed, no age limit**. She will take any man who will stop for a quick look. **But Lady Wisdom has a cover charge or a standard**. Yes, she is providing a banquet, but **she doesn't hide the fact that...Acquiring wisdom is never separate from discipline or correction...**

No, anyone can still come in, but they are going to know what the standard is. They are going to know because it's **not in the fine print**. It's clearly stated by the welcoming nice lady in comfortable shoes. **Yes, she's sad for a moment when someone turns away** because there will be correction and discipline at this banquet of wisdom. **She doesn't lower the standard**. **She asks if receiving discipline and being corrected are deal breakers**.

Let's go back to the beginning of the book. **These are the proverbs of Solomon, David's son, king of Israel. ² Their purpose is to teach people wisdom and discipline... Proverbs 1:1-2** This is the purpose of the whole collection of Proverbs. Discipline is directly connected with wisdom. **You cannot have true wisdom that changes your life if you ignore discipline.** And discipline is indistinguishable from correction.

When you read a little further in this introduction of Proverbs, you see another reference to discipline. **⁷ Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.** 1:7

If wisdom is inseparable from discipline, then it is the fool who doesn't want anyone telling them what to do or being told that they are wrong.

Discipline is the ultimate test to see if the simple will become wise or a fool.

This is where we see that a false gospel rears its ugly head. Do you know what a false gospel is? It's something that looks a little like the Gospel or good news that Jesus presented to those who were to follow him or reject him. It's like the way these two women are similar in their asking. There's just enough from the folly to make it sound a little like something that turns out good. This is what we call the "forgiveness only Gospel". This is where, unlike lady wisdom, the preacher, teacher, evangelist, missionary, really **does put anything that has to do with discipline and correction **in the fine print**. Just say you **believe that Jesus is real and that he paid for your sins and received his gift of salvation. And you don't have to do anything but raise your hand. We don't even ask people to come forward while playing "Just as I am."** There is **nothing about counting the cost, or actually following Jesus and obeying what he says. There can be no effort, or it's not really grace. Well, yes, it is free, but it wasn't and isn't cheap. You will have to surrender everything and trust Jesus. We like to say, and I'm quoting one of my mentors through his books, Bill Hull, "grace isn't anti-effort, it's anti-earning."****

Here's the other side of this coin...**character is revealed by one's response to discipline or correction.**

I like to be right. When I'm corrected that means that someone else is pointing out that I was wrong about something. In this area my character has been strengthened because now I'm much more ready to see this as an opportunity for growth. But on the other side of the coin, I get annoyed with people who have to be right all of the time.

Coaching tennis doesn't work if the player won't listen to corrections. They won't get any better. They won't see the success in wins and losses. Maybe that

flaw in the back hand doesn't matter when playing a lesser athlete, but once they play someone good, this flaw is exposed.

The main thing that is revealed is a combination of pride and lack of trust in the one who knows better. It also shows a lack of patience and persistence. It takes a commitment to doing something the right way consistently before the benefit is seen.

Here's what it says about that one type of person, the fool or mocker. **8 So don't bother correcting mockers; they will only hate you. But correct the wise, and they will love you. Proverbs 9:8**

Lady Wisdom isn't going to beg to get people in the door who don't want to be corrected. She knows that their pride won't allow it. She knows that the mocker or fool doesn't want to place themselves under anyone's authority. They still think that freedom is continuing to do stupid things and paying the price.

But where does wisdom come from? Well, it originates with God. He defines right and wrong, wise and foolish. We will get to that in a minute. But most often this discipline comes through a representative of God. It is dispensed through relationships with people who have walked with God longer. Who have had their character transformed and have become wise. **Wisdom comes from those further along the path...**

Entering the banquet there are wise people inside, enjoying the banquet, sharing the nourishment from God that made them wise to the newcomers. *These people who have been at the banquet longer* are the ones who help pass on the discipline and correction they received.

It always comes back to relationships with people who will tell you with love when you are "missing the mark". I remember a young man who got married and had a few kids. He didn't get much help from his dad on how to be a husband and a father. Predictably, he was struggling in both areas. His marriage was shaky, and he wasn't getting anywhere with his kids. After banging his head on the wall over and over, it got bad enough that he was willing to enter the banquet. The one at the door playing the role of Wisdom was a man who you would know if you've been around Eagle Ridge for a while. His name was Sterling Gatling. This young man asked Sterling for help. He was willing to be honest with him and allow Sterling to correct him and give him loving discipline. He also received the benefit of Sterling's vast wisdom by reflecting with him about his situation. And of course, with Sterling, the wisdom was based upon a man who had submitted himself to Jesus Christ.

Wisdom comes from those further along the path...but cannot be acquired separate from God.

This is where we come to the "fear of the Lord." This phrase shows up in the Chapter 1, as we read earlier. Then it shows up again in Chapter 9 between Lady Wisdom's invitation and the woman named Folly.

This phrase is troubling because we interpret that Hebrew word that is translated "fear" as terror. The kind of fear makes your body shake, and your breathing and heart rate quicken. This fear is that harm is about to be done to you and suffering will follow.

Fear, in "fear of the Lord" means, "fear is knowing what to respect, knowing how to place oneself in a learning posture." Pg 62 **And what is a learning posture?** Being willing to come under someone's authority allowing that someone to discipline and correct you.

Fear of the lord is the first step or correction that wisdom brings. It's respecting God's right to be my authority, my teacher. That's what it means to take a learning posture.

In my life that happened when we went through a church consult with Greg Weins and HGC. At the end, he said that I could be a good leader, but I wasn't leading well. At that moment I said to myself "I'm going to do whatever he tells me I need to do to become the leader/pastor God called me to be.

The fear of the Lord is about deciding who is going to be the teacher that you will submit yourself to. The word for that in the culture of Jesus' time was to be a disciple. You followed this person around listening to what they say and copy how they live.

One who can save must be one who is fierce. It's the difference between seeing a caged lion and being near one in the wild, that chooses not to devour me, but protects me. **The fear of the Lord is allowing the God who spoke the world into existence, who is all powerful and all-knowing to tell me "what is what."** This is a fierce teacher who loves you so much that he will do anything to make you like his son Jesus.

"Wisdom's feast, then—her instruction and her correction—is a first course in the fear of Yahweh. Her call is not an invitation to some school of manners or moral self-improvement. Rather it is an invitation to know the Holy One." Pg.

Oh, yeah, I want to know God. Do you really? This is not a trivial thing. This is not about knowing about God, a bio on who God is. This is to be in a relationship with him. **If I am to know God, then I will be changed and I will lose control because he is a consuming fire. He will consume me, but not destroy me. He will refine me through fire.**

Wisdom's banquet not only corrects...We have already established that, but it does something beyond correction. It corrects you until you know how to correct yourself. You see yourself and your environment accurately...it also teaches the skill of discernment.

Discernment is the ability to judge well. You can look at something and see it accurately and then decide about it.

This is the skill to decide between folly and wisdom, which are giving similar invitations; folly copies the language of wisdom to sound similar. Now I can tell the difference between what Wisdom is really offering and what Folly is really offering. I can see beyond the door of each to where stepping through that door will take me.

⁴ These proverbs will give insight to the simple, knowledge and discernment to the young. Proverbs 1:4 Now the simple and the young who are simple because they don't have the life experiences of someone older now will have discernment beyond their years. Now the young don't have to be babes lost in the woods or a lamb amongst wolves.

There are some people in their teens that I trust their decision making better than I do some people my age who have been doing things their own way all their life. They just keep going from one very predictable problem to another, rinse and repeat.

If you are young or just simple, with some wear on the tires, here's the invitation. 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. ⁶ Leave your simple ways behind, and begin to live; learn to use good judgment." 9:4-6 You are not living the full life that Jesus promised us without learning how to discern what path is God's and what path isn't.

This is a Proverb that encourages us to choose the path of correction, discipline, but with the fear of God. Submitting to God's authority and the authority of those who are more mature in the faith.

But it is also a cautionary tale. Where does the decision to join folly lead? Is it just frustration and hard knocks, no. The end for the fool is not comedy, it's tragedy.

The fool is not that silly court jester who acts silly and does dumb things that make us laugh at him. He is not for our amusement. He is a warning. ¹² If you become wise, you will be the one to benefit. If you scorn wisdom, you will be the one to suffer. 9:12 The door we choose is what we get. You reap only what you sow. Those dandelion seeds that blow across the grass don't produce roses.

I think verse 18 speaks for itself. ¹⁸ But little do they know that the dead are there. Her guests are in the depths of the grave. 9:18

There is hope for you and me. It comes through choosing...

- Discipline and correction.
- To take the posture of a student who submits to a teacher.
- Know the God of the universe.

These choices will allow you to acquire the skill of discernment. Then the student becomes the teacher sitting in the banquet watching to see who comes in the door. _

Join the Banquet. Here's the menu posted on the door.

The appetizer: Learn from the suffering of your foolishness.

Think about how you have suffered from your foolishness. Has that translated into pursuing wisdom for you?

The antre: How can I enjoy and remain in Wisdom's banquet?

Where does this begin? The fear of the Lord.

The dessert: Pray proverbs 1:1-7

Lady from Cultivate who says, "When you ask us to do something, I do it."

Father you have given me these proverbs of Solomon, David's son, king of Israel.

² Their purpose is to teach me wisdom and discipline, to help me understand the insights of the wise.

³ Their purpose is to teach me to live disciplined and successful lives, to help me do what is right, just, and fair.

⁴ These proverbs will give insight to me when I am simple,

knowledge and discernment to me if I am young. ⁵ Let me if I am wise listen to these proverbs and become even wiser. Let me with understanding receive guidance

⁶ by exploring the meaning in these proverbs and parables, the words of the wise and their riddles. ⁷ Help me to understand that the Fear of the Lord is my

foundation for true knowledge, but it is foolish to despise wisdom and discipline.