

Pillar Passage Proverbs 9
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Welcome to another Pillar Passage. Today we are looking at Proverbs 9.

This proverb is constructed with 3 sections and it's like a sandwich. There's 2 pieces of bread and meat in the middle. We're going to look at each of the pieces of this sandwich, make some observations, and come back through and look at what is most important here.

It begins with a description of wisdom. *Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn her seven pillars. She has slaughtered her beasts; she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table. She has sent out her young women to call from the highest place in the town, "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" To him who lacks sense she says, "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight."*

Wisdom is described here in even sensual terms. We might even say with a sexual undertone to this—which we will come back to in a moment. This is important to note; wisdom is described—if we weren't told right at the beginning that we were talking about wisdom, we might even go so far—having read other passages in proverbs saying—this almost sounds like a madam and her prostitutes seeking to lure men in. But that no such thing. It's quite the opposite. We need to, perhaps, ask ourselves why might that come to our minds as we think about this?

Let's look to the second section and the meat of the sandwich, verse 7-12. It then moves on to talking about wisdom. *Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury.* The first piece here, is you need to think about yourself and it will end this way as well. Thinking about ourselves and the effect upon ourselves of wisdom—or not having wisdom. So therefore, *Do not reprove a scoffer, verse 8, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.*

Now we come to the high point, really, the center of this entire proverb. It is numerically the center of the whole sandwich. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. For by me (wisdom) you days will be multiplied, (not figuratively—literally. You will literally live longer) and years will be added to your life. If you are wise, you are wise for yourself.* (There is great benefit to yourself first.)

It could be a benefit to others but that depends on whether they are wise. It depends on wisdom for themselves whether they possess wisdom. But wisdom is first for yourself.

If you scoff—if you reject wisdom, you too will bear it. You will have no one else to point to and say, "He did this to me."

What we see here is that there is a moral dimension to folly. Folly is not—you know, you see TV shows and Homer Simpson is a fool and it's entertaining. But there is a moral dimension to folly. We may not mean to, but we are morally culpable in our folly, because it involves rejection of the Holy One—which we'll come back to in a moment.

The second piece of bread. We've seen the woman, Wisdom. Now we see the woman, Folly. And we are meant to compare the two. We are meant to notice what is the same, and what is different. The woman Folly speaks, but she's loud. *She is seductive and she knows nothing.* Again, there is a sensual element here; you might even say sexual undertones. *She knows nothing. She sits that the door of her house* (very similar). *She take a seat on the highest places of the town*, (just like it is said in the first section). She also calls *to those who pass by, who are going straight on their way.* She's looking for those already corrected by wisdom; who are already walking straight. She wants to seduce them. Her message is the same. *"Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!"* At least it's the same at the beginning. *And to him who lacks sense she says, "Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant."* *By he* (the simpleton) *does not know that the dead are there, and her guests are in the depths of Sheol.*

What is different here for the woman, Wisdom? First off, we might note at the beginning the woman, Wisdom, does not do the speaking. She sends out her young women to speak. While the woman, Folly, sits at the door of her house and she herself calls to those who pass by.

Why is this? This is because wisdom—true wisdom- is self-replicating. True wisdom is fruitful. Folly is not fruitful because it ends in death. Folly ends in death. Folly must yell for the housetop itself because it does not have fruit. One of the ways that you can tell if there is wisdom, is wisdom is known by its fruit, as someone once said—Jesus Himself. Wisdom is known by her children—by her offspring. You can tell wisdom by the quality of their children.

You can also tell wisdom by its beauty. You can see here that this whole passage (v.1-6) pictures a beautiful and pleasurable scenario; and a fruitful scenario.

What folly must do to be attractive, Folly is a parasitic, false substitute for the real thing. Folly seeks to be beautiful, but it knows nothing. Folly cannot create anything; it can only steal—steal what wisdom creates. It can only steal the bread produced by the hard work of wisdom. All folly can do is appeal to our sinful impulses. It cannot create anything beautiful.

There is something—and this is why wisdom is described in even sensual pleasurable terms—wisdom is not just being right, wisdom results in beautiful things; in pleasure; in clean pleasures. You see someone who exercises wisdom; who exercises mastery over their craft—you ask them to produce a wooden instrument or wooden mantle for instance for your fireplace. They do it and you come back 2 weeks later, and you look at it. It is not just an example of mastery in carpentry, it is beautiful! You say that it's sublime. It gives you pleasure just to look at it; just to set a clock on top of it. There is something pleasurable to it which folly is only trying to parasitically ape.

How do we know the difference between the two? How do we know the difference between what is truly beautiful and sublime, in all place, at all times, no matter what? How do we know that verses the false substitute?

We come back to the middle, and it comes down to possessing the fear of the Lord and the knowledge of the Holy One. This is **the** top knowledge from which all other knowledge flows.

To put this in the negative, I think it was once G. K. Chesterton who said, that when a person stops believing in God, it not that they then believe in nothing, it is then at that point that they'll believe anything. We see that today as our nation departs from a knowledge of the Holy One it lacks insight into every other area. Our most recent Supreme Court nominee could not even say what a woman is, as she said, "I am not a biologist." That is where we are at, where officials at the top levels of our government cannot even possess the insight to tell you what a woman is. This is emblematic of a deep defection from the Holy One.

If you want to know the difference between wisdom and folly; if you want to know the difference true beauty and false beauty; if you want to know the difference between true, deep, abiding pleasure and false, fleeting pleasures it all begins—not matter what area of life; whether we're talking about religion, or art, or mathematics, or carpentry, or parenting, or television watching, or lawn design—whatever "it" is, to discern the true beauty; the true wisdom; what entails true mastery in that area, it all begins with a knowledge of the Holy One. From that flows every other insight in life.

Noddle of this. Reflect upon this and it will take you far.

How did Proverbs 9's description of wisdom differ from your definition?