

# Wisdom: God's Remedy for Foolish Living

## Proverbs

**B.I: There is a cure for the congenital disease of human foolishness that causes so much grief and pain. God calls it... WISDOM.**

### **What I read in the newspaper:**

When Solomon compiled the wise sayings of Proverbs, he was motivated by the same concern shared by every faithful parent. I believe he wanted to protect his children from the self-inflicted pains and personal disasters that were so common among people in his day. He had witnessed the heartbreak of couples whose son had foolishly run away from home to escape his parents authority. He had heard the bitter weeping of daughters lamenting their unwanted pregnancies. He surely had known businessmen who had experienced financial ruin due to impulsive investing and undisciplined spending.

As in our day, the wreckage of foolish living seemed to lie everywhere he turned. Broken friendships. Ruined marriages. Abused children. Bankrupt businesses. Reckless government. Like a malignant plague that had infected every member of the human race, the consequences of foolish thinking and living were everywhere. Brokenness, heartache, ruin, and death - no community was left untouched. And in every case the source of the problem was completely predictable: unbridled lust, unfettered greed, addiction to pleasure, disdain of authority, love of self, hatred of others, and most of all - rejection of God.

It was just like what *we read about* in the news every day. In fact, our good friend and Television News Reporter, Brandon Utterback, recently quipped: "As long as there are crazy people in the world, my job is secure." But Solomon's take on it was not that people are crazy, but that

we are all inherently foolish. We were born with it like a congenital disease.

By God's grace, however, Solomon had discovered something that so many in his day, and ours, had completely overlooked. Namely, that there is a cure for the malignant disease of human foolishness. God calls it... WISDOM.

As you know, Proverbs is called the book of wisdom. It was compiled to teach us how to live skillfully and successfully. Or, as we learned in the first week of our study, it was designed to teach us how to navigate life in a sinful world for the glory of God and our own wellbeing. Solomon is determined to teach us that living well requires a kind of wisdom with which no man is born. It is something that comes from outside of ourselves. It is something that must be must sought for, learned, treasured, and obeyed if it is to accomplish its healing and life-giving work in our lives.

So here is the question of the morning: How can I learn to live wisely in a perilously sinful world? I want to offer four answers to that question.

If You Want to Live Wisely in a sinful world...

## **I. You Must Understand Wisdom's Origin:**

1. It's important to understand that the wisdom of Proverbs is not merely human wisdom. One of the things that make it so different and powerful is the fact that it didn't originate in the musings of sinful men. In fact, the Bible often warns us about human wisdom.

2. Turn with me to 1 Cor. 1:18. (Read 1:18-25).

3. You see, man's wisdom leads us to fundamental conclusions about life and eternity that are simply wrong. And that's a really dangerous thing! Mark Twain famously said, "It's not what you *don't* know that will get you into trouble, but what you know for sure that just aint so!" And frankly, this is the bane of all human philosophy and psychology. Every

ideologue has his own unique take on what is true and how one should live in the light of that so-called truth.

4. In ancient Greece, for example, the Epicureans taught that the humanity's greatest good was to experience as much pleasure as possible during one's lifetime. On the other hand, the Stoics taught that man's greatest good is found in self-denial and indifference to all passion and pleasure. In our day the dominant philosophy seems to be materialism, the idea that "He who dies with the most toys wins." Or perhaps its individualism, which believes the highest good is being free to do whatever one pleases. It's the philosophy of "Just do it," or "No Rules, Just Right." But God laughs at such man-made wisdom. It amounts to so much foolishness, and only furthers human suffering.

5. The Wisdom that Solomon points us to is of a different kind altogether. Turn with me to chapter 8 of Proverbs. This entire chapter personifies wisdom as a woman who invites people to receive her counsel. Notice what she says about herself beginning with 22. (Read 8:22-32).

6. Solomon's point here is that true wisdom is far greater than anything that can originate in the minds of men. In fact, he presents wisdom as something that existed before the creation of the world. It was a kind of co-creator of the cosmos and was co-eternal with God.

7. In fact, throughout church history some have suggested that this passage may actually be a description of the pre-incarnate Christ. After all, He is the One who reveals God's wisdom to believers (1 Cor. 1:30). And Paul tells us that "in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3).

8. Nevertheless, Solomon wants us to know that the wisdom He is speaking of is the very wisdom of God. You want to know how awesome and reliable God's wisdom is? Look at creation! If God used wisdom when He created the universe, certainly people need wisdom for the challenges of life. Moreover, if wisdom co-created the world and

everything in it, then it is certainly sufficient to meet whatever challenges you may be facing right now.

9. What is this wisdom? Wisdom is none other than the mind of God. How did Solomon get access to the mind of God? Simply stated, the mind of God is revealed by the word of God. Keep your finger here in chap. 8 and turn back for a moment to chapter 2. Read Prov. 2:6-11

10. If You Want to Live Wisely in a sinful world you must understand Wisdom's origin. It's source is the word of God.

11. Secondly, if You Want to Live Wisely in a sinful world

## **II. You Must Believe Wisdom's Promises:**

1. Let's jump back to chapter 8 and pick up with v. 32 (8:32). Before we read this, let's make an important observation about the preceding verses. Notice the time sequences of wisdom's argument.

8:24-28 "When, " "when," "before," "before," "While," "When,"  
"When," "When, ""When," "When," "When,"

8:30 "Then"

8:32 "NOW therefore..."

In other words, Lady Wisdom has been building, and building, and building her argument to lead to the following conclusion:

(Read 8:32-35)

2. Lady Wisdom's conclusion is that those who believe the promises of God are blessed. You see, beloved, *there is* a cure for the malignant and devastating disease of human foolishness. It is the life-giving, joy-inspiring, soul-healing word of the living God.

A. Proverbs 1:33 "But he who listens to me shall live securely And will be at ease from the dread of evil."

- B. Proverbs 3:13–18 “How blessed is the man who finds wisdom And the man who gains understanding. <sup>14</sup> For her profit is better than the profit of silver And her gain better than fine gold. <sup>15</sup> She is more precious than jewels; And nothing you desire compares with her. <sup>16</sup> Long life is in her right hand; In her left hand are riches and honor. <sup>17</sup> Her ways are pleasant ways And all her paths are peace. <sup>18</sup> She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who hold her fast.”
- C. Beloved, do you see the goodness and grace of God here? He loves His people. He delights in blessing us, and helping us, and leading us to green pastures and still waters. He promises us everything we need for life and godliness. But, apprehending what we need requires that we exercise faith in his promises.
- D. God’s blessings are not for those who merely *say they believe* his promises, but for those who act on His promises in the every-day decisions of life. Notice what Lady Wisdom says:
- 1) (8:32) “blessed are those who keep my ways.”
  - 2) (8:33) “Heed instruction and be wise.”
- E. In other words, Lady wisdom is calling not merely for a profession of belief, but for obedience consistent with that belief. For example:
- 1) If you *believe* that disciplining your son will save him from his own foolishness (22:15), you will discipline him.
  - 2) If you *believe* that God delights in a just balance (11:1), then you will be honest in business even to your own hurt.
  - 3) If you believe that a gracious woman attains honor (11:16), you will strive to be a gracious woman.
  - 4) If you *believe* the merciful man does himself good (11:17), you will strive to be merciful.

5) If you *believe* a wise son accepts his father's instruction (13:1), then you will resolve to be submissive to your father.

F. Beloved, this is the way of blessing because it is the way of wisdom. And if you want what wisdom offers you must spend much time learning from her. Notice v. 34, "Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at my doorposts."

G. In other words, if you want this wisdom you have to spend time in the word of God like a love-struck young man who is always at the door of his beloved. Or to change the analogy, Peter says, "Like newborn babies, *long for* the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation" (1 Pet. 2:2).

3. If You Want to Live Wisely in a sinful world you must understand Wisdom's origin, and You Must Believe Wisdom's Promises. Third...

### **III. You must Accept Wisdom's Invitation:**

1. Look across the page to chapter 9. Here Lady wisdom is back once again. But this time, another woman comes into play who is the arch-enemy of Lady Wisdom. Her name is Lady Folly. (Read 9:1-18)

2. Now we don't have time to unpack this whole chapter, but notice what is taking place here. There are two women who have built two houses on opposite corners of the street. Both have prepared a feast and both are calling out a general invitation for all to come and dine. But you must choose between the two.

3. Lady Wisdom invites you to come into her home and satisfy your soul on a banquet of God's wisdom, blessing and the knowledge of the Holy One. Lady Folly, on the other hand, invites you into her home to satisfy your flesh on easy sex, easy money, and every form of lust and sin known to man.

4. Lady wisdom's house will offer you the kind of blessed life that springs forth from the fear of the Lord. Lady Folly offers compelling, and deceptive temptation that will enslave and lead her guests to the grave.

5. The question is, whose appeal will you heed? Let there be no mistake: You will respond to one invitation or the other. And if the Bible is true, you and I were born with a heart that is bent toward Lady Folly. Problem is, trusting her to navigate through life in a sinful world is like trusting in a broken compass on a stormy sea on a rudderless raft.

6. And by the way, this is a choice we must make every day, and several times a day.

A. Men, when you are on the computer and a tempting image appears, you must make a choice. At whose banquet will you sit to satisfy your soul?

B. Ladies, when you are tempted to gossip or purchase something you don't need and can't afford, you must make a choice. At whose banquet will you sit to satisfy your soul?

7. This is where the choice between living wisely and living foolishly takes place. If you want to live wisely in a sinful world, then you must Understand Wisdom's Origin, Believe Wisdom's Promises, and Accept Wisdom's Invitation. (Also, Heed Wisdom's Warning – 8:36 & 1:24-28).

Application:

1. As you evaluate your life today, what foolish habits have you established that cause harm to your relationship with God, your mate, or others?

A. Perhaps there are habits of laziness, being undisciplined in your speech, your money, or your time.

B. Perhaps you have developed some foolish habits in the area of eating, or entertainment that need to be addressed.

2. How committed are you to spend time learning God's wisdom from the pages of His word?

A. Do you have a plan for reading God's word every day?

B. Do you study key passages that speak to the specific issues of your life?

C. Are you "watching daily at wisdom's gates; waiting at her doorpost?" Do you earnestly desire the pure milk of the Word of God?

3. What specific changes do you need to make in your life so that you can grow daily in your knowledge of and obedience to the word of God?

A. What specific plan will you follow to make these changes?

B. Who will you ask to help you?

C. When will you begin?

4. Beloved, if you desire to navigate life through a sinful world for the glory of God and your own wellbeing, you simply must be proactive about learning and applying God's wisdom every day. Proverbs 19:27 warns, "Cease listening, my son, to discipline, *And you will* stray from the words of knowledge.

B.I: There is a cure for the congenital disease of human foolishness that causes so much grief and pain. God calls it... WISDOM. And it is found in His sufficient Word.