



## **"REASONS TO REJOICE"**

**"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16**

### **PROVERBS LESSON 6**

In our lesson last week, we finished chapter 7 and read the first half of chapter 8, focusing on the value and rewards of wisdom in verses 12-21. Today, beginning in verse 22, we will be looking at the value of wisdom to God in creation. This next section is really interesting to think about. Chapter seven recalls the dangers of the foolish woman, and now we are looking at the other woman, the "lady" or the "personification of God's attribute of wisdom. I pray that as we wrap up this section of Proverbs this week, we continue to ask the Holy Spirit to speak to our hearts, to open our eyes, and to increase our desire to walk in the wisdom of the Lord.

#### **First Day**

1. Read Proverbs 8:1-36. Although we will be starting our study in verse 22, it's important to take it in context and see where we left off. (It's always awkward to start in the middle of a chapter.) What is the main point of each of the following sections:
  - A. **8:22-26**
  - B. **8:27-29**
  - C. **8:30-31**
  - D. **8:32-36**
2. How many times is the word "when" repeated in 22-36? The word "before"?

3. Notice that the words "listen" and "blessed" are used alternatively quite often. Why is that? What is significant about that?
  
4. Who was here first, wisdom or "us"? What do you think is the point that Solomon is trying to make by pointing that out?

Some scholars try to say that it's tempting to see wisdom here as Christ Himself, but many others don't agree. Although Christ does reveal God's wisdom to unbelievers (1 Cor. 1:30), and in Him is all wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3), not every reference to wisdom in the book of Proverbs refers to Christ Himself. We can see Wisdom here as a "personification of God's attribute of wisdom." Eric Lane wrote, "Solomon is appealing to his sons to heed his teaching because it is identical to the Wisdom that is in God Himself, and that marks everything God ever did or said. If this is so, they must take it seriously. Under the Old Covenant it came through the Law and its teachers: parents, priests, and prophets. This does not mean that Christ has no place here, for under the New Covenant, Wisdom is not merely taught by but embodied in Christ, which is why this chapter brings Christ to our minds. But basically it is calling on believers under both covenants to receive the words of Wisdom, because this Wisdom is not human but that of God Himself. This is what He now proceeds to prove from three considerations; that wisdom existed in eternity, that wisdom was supreme in creation, and that wisdom made creation enjoyable."

I also think it's important to realize that wisdom is "outside" of us. The wisdom we need to live our lives is not inside of us, it comes from outside. We shouldn't be listening to ourselves only, because we would end up on the wrong path. Listening and heeding God's wisdom is the only way we will stay on the straight and narrow.

5. Write your first thoughts on Proverbs 8:22-26.

We'll end here today. I pray that you are thankful that God provides us with wisdom to live. That's a huge "Reason to Rejoice"!

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my door." Proverbs 8:34

### Second Day

**Work on your memory verse. Are you anxious to hear God's wisdom?**

1. Read Proverbs 8:22-31. What's your favorite verse in this section? Why?

Wisdom is portrayed as having been around before anything else. The Lord "possessed me" means "I was the Lord's." An accurate paraphrase of 8:22a would be, "I, Wisdom, was the Lord's in the beginning; yea, I was with Him from all eternity." This divine attribute was eternal; it didn't really have a beginning. This description is simply a poetic way of describing God as the "only wise God." This poetry continues in verses 24-26.

2. Solomon continues this poetry in verses 24-26, showing us that before anything existed, God was there, and He is eternally wise. And it's from that eternal wisdom that the teaching of Proverbs comes. What does this tell us about the authority of Proverbs?

3. In verse 30, who is "Him" and who is "I"? What is wisdom described as?

Being "beside Him" or "at His side" implies intimate association. Craftsman is translated as "Architect." This isn't saying that wisdom was the designer. God Himself was the Creator and Designer of the universe. God was wise in creation, in every way you look at it!

4. Read 8:32-36. List all the things we are called to do with "wisdom."
5. How serious is the call to pay attention to wisdom? What picture is Solomon painting in verse 34?

We are called to do much more than simply listen. We have to retain it, keep it, watch for it daily. The word "d disdain" in verse 33 can be translated as "ignore," and gives the sense of letting something slip away. Solomon tells us that our attitude should be serious toward keeping God's wisdom. He paints a picture of a servant waiting for the master to come give him instructions, or a citizen expecting an announcement from the King. In our day, maybe it's like waiting on the dock for your husband to come home from fishing, or like a military wife waiting anxiously for the call that her husband is coming home. It's like you're sitting at the edge of your chair, just waiting and watching and listening. That's how serious we are to be when seeking wisdom from above.

6. How serious are you about seeking God's wisdom in your life? Do you seek His Word daily? Do you seek His wisdom for every decision? Are you "waiting at the posts of wisdom's door" so when God speaks you will hear it immediately?
7. Are you seeking God in your:
  - A. Personal life as a believer?
  - B. Parenting skills?
  - C. Role as a wife?
  - D. Friendships?
  - E. Financial decisions?
8. According to verses 35-36, what is the reward of seeking wisdom? The consequences of not?

"Wrongs his own soul" or "fails to find" in verse 36 literally means "missing the mark" by firing in the wrong direction or with the wrong range. It's the same word used in the Old and New Testament for "sin" in the sense of "falling short of the glory of God" in Romans 3:23.

David Hubbard wrote, "Wisdom has made her case; they now must make their choices." Discipleship isn't just reading and studying, it is deciding. We have two options; listen to the Lord or not. The tug of war between wisdom and folly over the loyalty of our hearts has been repetitive to this point, and continues throughout Proverbs. It's kind of black or white, really. Choose or not. Decide or not. Listen or not. It reminds us of the famous words in Joshua 24 where he says, "Choose this day whom you will serve, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." And these chapters make it very clear; there are consequences to both choices. It's up to you. Life or death.

9. Read 1 John 5:12. How does this verse really sum it all up?

Bless you, ladies. As a result of this chapter, may you listen more intently, watch more fervently, and pay closer attention to His voice!

### Third Day

**Work on your memory verse. Post it somewhere obvious so you can see it every day as a reminder!**

Today we will study chapter nine which is the last chapter of what is called the "wisdom speeches." Solomon once again pits Lady Wisdom with Lady Folly, and the issue of choice is made perfectly clear.

1. Read Proverbs 9:1-18. How does this chapter basically summarize the first 8 chapters? Are there any repeated phrases, words, or illustrations?

As we read this chapter, we can picture two houses, one on either side of the road. In one house stands Lady Wisdom, elegantly inviting us in. On the other we have Lady Folly, seductive and sly, beckoning us to enter. We are at a crossroad.

2. It appears that everyone is allowed to enter Lady Wisdom's home except whom, according to verses 7 and 12?

All are invited to join the feast! Christ invites us to come just as we are; to taste and see; to come to the banqueting table (Matthew 22:1-14, John 3:16). But although all are invited, not all will respond to the invitation.

3. This chapter opens and closes with a call to eat; one from Lady Wisdom and one from Lady Folly. How would you describe Lady Wisdom's invitation to the feast in verses 1-2?
4. Wisdom sends out her maid servants to invite people to attend the feast. Why do you think she cries out from the "highest places in the city"? (Vs. 3)

Ortlund wrote, "No junk food at this feast! Lady Wisdom has been bustling about preparing a banquet of her best -- for us. Mixing the wine does not mean watering it down. It means adding spices to make the wine even better. The point of his metaphor is important. Think back to our last chapters. The delicacies of wisdom satisfy us in every area. Proverbs chapter one, wisdom preserves us from violent people. Chapter 2, wisdom enters our heart with peace of conscience. Chapter 3, wisdom improves us financially. Chapter 4, wisdom elevates our status in society. Chapter 5, wisdom makes sex better. Chapter 6, wisdom gets us up off the sofa and successfully accomplishes worthy goals. Chapter 7, wisdom protects us in temptation. Chapter 8, wisdom opens our eyes to the joyous creation in which we live. And we haven't even gotten to the actual proverbs yet, chapters 10-31!"

5. Read about another feast in Matthew 22:3-4, 8-10, and Luke 14:15-24. Who is invited to that one?
  
6. Again we see the choice in verse 6. What do we have to do before we accept the invitation?
  
7. Wisdom sent her maids to the top of the hill so all could hear the invitation. How did the adulteress do it, according to 7:10-23?

It might help you to put parentheses around verses 7-9 to keep the continuity together from verses 1-6 and 10-12. In verses 1-6 we read the Lady's invitation, and then in verses 10-12, we receive her instruction. She has a little explaining to do in between.

8. You and I are called to extend the invitation and invite others to the feast. We are called to go to the highways and the byways and share the message of Christ. Do you have a basic understanding of the Gospel, and are you able to share it with others? (If not, maybe you can meet with your leader for help.) Are you willing to pass out invitations to those you meet?

Recently a friend of mine was supposed to come by my house and pick up a Bible I was giving her. I put it in a bag and left it on the front porch for her to come by sometime during the day. She kept forgetting to pick it up, so it sat on my porch for about a week. My family didn't know why a Bible was sitting on our porch, so they both began teasing me about my "new form" of evangelism! They wondered if I just left it there, hoping some random person would just come along, see it, and pick it up. After having a good laugh about it, I began to wonder if sometimes my "evangelism style"

resembles that thought. Do I just have this treasure of the Gospel in my heart and simply "hope" someone will someday ask me about it, or do I actively go out to the "high places" and call out, extending God's invitation to salvation to all who will listen. Sure made me think...

9. How and when did you accept Christ as your personal Savior? Write a brief testimony of how you came to know Christ and when you accepted the invitation.

We'll end right here. I am so blessed and thankful to be called a son of God and a daughter of the King. I have chosen to walk down the road of wisdom, listen to His voice, study His Word, and follow after Christ. Have you?

#### **Fourth Day**

**Continue to study and apply your memory verse.**

1. Read chapter 9:1-18. Let's take a look at verses 7-9. How does a scoffer or a "mockers" receive correction?

A "scoffer" is anyone who never accepts correction. "He thinks other people really need his opinions. He is easily offended. He is above other people. And if someone seems to threaten his superiority, he scoffs. He mocks. He mouths off. He denigrates." (Ortlund)

2. How does a wise man receive correction?

3. Why will a wise man love the one who gives him correction?
4. Verse 8 basically tells us to "choose our pupil wisely." Why?
5. How do the following verses support this thought?
  - a. Proverbs 15:31
  - b. Proverbs 17:10
  - c. Proverbs 19:25
  - d. Proverbs 25:12
  - e. Proverbs 25:5-6
6. How teachable are you? Are you ready to receive from people? Are there some areas in which you are willing to be taught, while in others, you don't want to hear it?
7. Examine your heart. How do you **handle** criticism? Who do you resemble more, Lady Wisdom or Folly?
8. How do you **offer** criticism? Are you harsh? Are you self righteous? Do you choose your words carefully and come to others in an attitude of humility and grace?

9. Romans 12:16 tells us "not to be wise in our own opinions." How do we balance that with holding each other accountable in love?

I read that those who are just and fair minded take in instruction like "nutrition and become stronger by it." I wish it was that easy. :(

10. I once read that we all should have someone that we can regularly ask, "How can I improve"? And then, of course, we need to listen. Do you have a friend who will hold you accountable? Do you regularly check in and ask those types of questions? If not, are you ready to find one?

Tomorrow we'll wrap up this chapter but for now, ask the Holy Spirit to make you a woman who is able to receive correction, process criticism fairly, and be taught by others. Amen??

### Fifth Day

**Write out your verse by memory.**

1. Read Proverbs 9:1-18, then go back and focus on verses 10-12. Read Proverbs 1:7. What are the similarities? The differences?
2. People are not wise or foolish by accident, or because of their genes. How do we become one or the other, according to the above verses?

Verse 12 sounds almost like it's saying that wisdom is only a benefit to ourselves. Obviously, this isn't true. It translates better this way:

"Whatever the consequences of your faith in God and His Word, good or ill, you will not ultimately be the loser, but in fact the chief gainer." The same with the scoffer. Although others will suffer as a result of the scoffer, he is the one who suffers the greatest because he alone will answer in eternity for his rejection of God's offer of salvation. It means "the harmful damages will fall squarely on our shoulders." I read once that we "cannot borrow character from each other." We alone answer to God. We all must accept Christ personally and ask Him for His wisdom to change us.

3. Read Proverbs 9:13-18. Lady Wisdom was prepared for her guests, and she also spent time searching them out. Contrast her with Lady Folly from these verses.

4. Notice the following contrasts between the two Ladies and fill in the blanks.:

- A. Lady Wisdom built her house. Lady Folly \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Lady Wisdom offered meat and wine. Lady Folly \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Lady Wisdom deals with us honestly. Lady Folly \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Lady Wisdom's followers live forever. Lady Folly's \_\_\_\_\_

Remember back in Proverbs 5:15-16, drinking water from your own cistern referred to sex in marriage. So here in 9:17 when Lady Folly talks about "stolen water," she's most likely referring to illicit sex. It's probably the same with food eaten in secrecy.

5. Although appealing, what is the end result of her invitation according to verse 18?

For some reason, when I read verse 18, I picture the Haunted Mansion Ride at Disneyland. You know the part where they are having a feast, but it's all "ghosts" that are floating around the room? I picture "guests in the depths of hell" similar to that, only no smiles on their faces for sure.

We can obviously broaden the example of Lady Folly enticing us far wider than illicit sex. Any immorality, or any sin for that matter, has the potential of ending in death. Hebrews 11:25 talks about the "passing pleasure" of sin. Sin is pleasurable, but only for a season. It deceives us into thinking "it's all good!" We taste it and want more. But then we wake up.

6. Have you ever been completely deceived by someone or something, then realized that you got caught in a trap without even realizing it? If you remember, what was the progression of choices and sin that led you there? How did you get out?
  
7. Have you been "tasting" of something that isn't healthy for you? Is there some specific sin right now that you are flirting with or contemplating partaking in? Think again! Don't be deceived! Turn and run!
  
8. Read 1 John 2:15-17. Explain how this "pull of the world" affects every Christian. How is chapter 2 a good illustration of this?

The choice between wisdom and folly is on almost every page in Proverbs. You will constantly be confronted with a choice. Will you choose rightly? If you have made mistakes in your past and you still feel guilt ridden, please know that Christ's forgiveness covers everything you confess and ask forgiveness for. You can't outdo the depth of His forgiveness. The closing verse of our chapter talks about the "depths" of hell which makes our knees knock! But the depths of His love and forgiveness makes us shout for joy! In Ephesians 3:18, Paul says that he prays that we "may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height; to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that we may be filled with all the fullness of God."

I want to end with a quote I love from C.S. Lewis in one of his letters to his friend. He wrote, "You write much about your own sins. Beware ... lest humility should pass over into anxiety or sadness. It is bidden us to 'rejoice and always rejoice.' Jesus has cancelled the handwriting which was against us. Lift up our hearts!"