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PROVERBS 9

Proverbs Series

Open your Bibles with me, please, to Proverbs 9. I'm excited about this particular passage. The beginnings of this study are something I learned as a teenager. I started developing this in my life then and I'm continuing to develop it now.

When I was in my early twenties some of the material that I'm going to share with you really came to me because I did an in depth study of the book of Proverbs. This was really helpful for me, so I'm particularly excited about sharing this with you.

The whole idea here has to do with correction and valuing correction and how do we respond to correction. It's inspiring for me what the Bible has to say about this. I hope it will be for you as well. But that's going to start in verse 7. We start today at chapter 9 verse 1 and we're going to move ourselves up to verse 7 because wisdom is personified starting in Proverbs 9:1.

Wisdom has built her house; she has set up its seven pillars. I was saying at first, "I wonder what the seven pillars are? That would be great if I knew what those are." But the point here isn't that there are seven ideas, the idea is that seven is kind of a perfect number and wisdom is established there. That's the idea.

She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. In other words, there's this banquet prepared for us that's wisdom. We just need to come and drink of it. It's there, ready to go. God's designed it in the universe, as we talked about last week. It's built already.

She has sent out her servants, and she calls from the highest point of the city. This is her call. I'm going to read it in a moment, but before I do I want you to know that there's going to be another call, another feast, another house, another invitation at the end of the chapter that's from the foolish person. This is a call of wisdom. There's going to be the call of the fool later on, so be paying attention here because you can see some similarities. I'll draw them to you at the close.

But notice verse 4 – *"Let all who are simple come to my house!"* In other words, those who don't know very much. They're kind of naïve. The simple person's naïve. Come to my house! *To those who have no sense she says, "Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of insight."*

Now we're going to have these two competing worldviews presented here. We have wisdom being presented, we'll also have the call of the fool later on. They really represent these

competing worldviews that we see today. You'll see wherever you are because both are claiming to be right. Ever since the Garden of Eden we have these two worldviews that are established and they're both going to be presented here.

One appeals to the heart (both of them appeal to the heart, by the way). One of them appeals to the heart, the one of wisdom, through the mind. This idea of understanding, this idea of wisdom. The other one appeals to the senses, the desires of the heart that can sometimes get us into trouble. It appeals to more of a fleshly way. That's the foolish way.

Both of them claim to be right. One believes in truth, that is, God's truth. The other believes that everybody can create their own truth, whatever that may be.

One of these (the one to wisdom) believes that God's laws are the path to life. The other believes that God's laws are harsh, that they're old fashioned and pointless.

Everyone is going to have a chance to hear the call of God. All of us need to echo the call. So if everybody's going to hear that, we need to echo the call. We're just like sounding boards. So we hear the wisdom of God and we pass it on to others. That's what our job is, is to share this message with other people. All the people you come into contact with at work, at school, in your home, they need to be hearing the echo of wisdom's call out in their lives. They're going to hear the foolish call out through the media, through all kinds of places. They need to hear the wisdom call. It's a message that's meant to be shared with everyone.

Notice she takes the time to prepare a banquet. It's all ready. "*Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed.*" The meal I prepared is on the table. Our job is to just come and participate and take of it.

So there's this call of the wise and call of the fool speaking out into our world today and we're going to look more at the call of the fool when we get to it in the passage. I just want you to know that both of those are there and there's a contrast.

Now when we come to verse 7, we're going to see what I call a wisdom test. Are you wise? We're going to know how you're doing in the wisdom area when it comes to your response to sin and your response to correction. We're just going to look at those two things this morning and I'm going to emphasize the part of correction because that's what the passage we're looking at emphasizes.

If we look at Proverbs 9:7 it says this: *Whoever corrects a mocker invites insults.* Wow. Makes you wonder if you should correct that person. *Whoever corrects a mocker invites insults; whoever rebukes the wicked incurs abuse.* Oh wow. Maybe that person I shouldn't correct either.

I would suggest there are going to be times in your life when you feel like correcting when you shouldn't based on some things you see in the other person. Because I would suggest it's not good enough to be right. We also need to be wise. Being right means I see something and I want to correct someone. Wisdom says I better not do that right now because this is just going to incur abuse or I'm going to get myself into trouble. I'm going to invite insults. This isn't a good idea.

You have been in that situation, I'm sure. You're in a workplace and you know somebody's doing the wrong thing. You correct them and you incur abuse from it. Why? Because the person's receptiveness isn't there. So we have to not just ask the question do I have something that's true? Just because you know the truth doesn't mean you represent it or sometimes the way you present it illustrates the wisdom.

Let's go on. Verse 8 says, *Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you.* You've got to be careful. It's saying don't rebuke them there or they're going to hate you. *Rebuke the wise and they will love you. Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning.*

Knowing when to engage in a correction is strategic. This is where the rubber meets the road for us. Because each of us are going to have opportunity to correct someone or we're going to be corrected and we want to respond in the right kind of ways. I'm going to suggest to you that there are three principles that you want to ask yourself before you correct someone that'll help you to get the maximum out of the correction when you're doing it.

Let's look at the doing side first. We'll look at the receiving side in just a moment because we're all corrected too. Look at the doing side. I want to suggest that when you do correction you want to do it well. If you're going to do it well then you have to ask a first question and the first question is this: I want to check my own heart. Is my heart ready to do the correction?

I'm going to go to a different passage besides Proverbs in order to illustrate this. It comes from Galatians 6:1. Notice it's a passage about correction. *Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.*

Three things I want to point out from that verse that will help you check your heart. Number one, it says in that verse that *you who live by the Spirit.* Just because you see something wrong in somebody doesn't mean you are qualified to go and tell them about it. Maybe you need to back off. Maybe you need to get in touch with the Spirit before you do that. Number one, check your heart. Are you living by the Spirit?

Notice also it says *restore that person.* The goal of correction isn't justice – "I'm going to straighten you out." The goal is restoring them or moving them to a better place. Very important goal. Notice the way you do it is *gently.* So if you're used to yelling at people to get to correct them then you probably want to change because that's not what we're talking about here. We're talking about doing it gently.

Notice also it says at the end of that verse *watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.* May be tempted in the same area, but not likely. Maybe it's you're tempted in the correction process. I think that when we're correcting someone we are in a huge temptation area because now we have the truth and they don't have it, so our pride can come in our way, our defensiveness can come in the way, our attitude can come in the way, and we can be tempted to get off track here. The way we correct someone is strategic, so check your heart first. That's the first principle.

Let's look at the second principle that is evaluate the receptiveness of the person. I think that's what the passage is saying here. They don't just rebuke a mocker or rebuke a wicked person without thinking about it because you may incur abuse or they may hate you or whatever it says there. So be careful about that.

Jesus was also teaching about this idea in the Sermon on the Mount when He was talking about sharing the truth that they had. He says these words (and this is evaluate the receptiveness of the person) – *Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.*

The idea is evaluate your target audience. As you're talking to this person, if you know the person isn't going to be receptive, you might not want to cash your pearls, your pieces of wisdom, your theology, your ideas before them. At least you're going to be really careful how you do it because they may just reject that. So the second principle here is important to evaluate the receptiveness of the person.

The third thing I want to suggest, if you're going to do correction well, is that you choose the timing well. In Proverbs 25:12 we have an idea there. The idea in 25:12 says this: *Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold* (in other words, something really nice that looks attractive on someone when you look at them) *is a wise man's rebuke to a listening ear.*

It's the *listening ear* that's important. It's not just the *wise man's rebuke*. You might be wise, you might have a good rebuke in mind, but you have to look for the listening ear.

I tell parents, "Look, you have some good ideas you want to teach your kids. But if you're just doing reactive parenting and yelling at your kids whenever you see something's wrong or maybe you're even trying to do it right, you're not yelling at them, you're trying to correct them but the timing is off, you may lose the responsiveness." Sometimes you wait two hours later when the emotions have settled so that you have a listening ear.

Look for the listening ear. Listening ear is important. Timing becomes strategic.

I just want you to see that the scriptures here are guiding us in the way that we give correction out. You probably give correction out a lot, so I think these principles may be helpful for you to check your own heart first, to evaluate the person's receptiveness, and to choose the timing well. Those are some ideas that might help you.

The bottom line is that usually in correction you're looking for an outcome that's positive, not just spouting out that somebody did something wrong. You're trying to bring them to the next level. If that's your goal then you don't have a justice mentality, you have a teaching mentality, and teaching becomes part of the strategy to move them there. So that's on the giving side.

Let's talk about the receiving side because you and I receive correction regularly. I'm sure you do. I receive it. And how we receive it is going to be very important.

Here's a verse that talks about that. *He who listens* (or pays attention) *to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise.* In other words, the way you respond to correction is strategic again because if you respond to it, you're going to be a wise person. You're going to be able to respond in a good way.

Here's the problem. People don't correct well. I'm convinced that most of the time that people correct us they do it poorly.

I'll get an email from someone who's unhappy with me and they'll do it in a way that's biting or mean or unkind. Or someone may leave our church at some point and they're unhappy and so they may share it in a way that's just not the best.

Here's what I teach leaders. I say, "Here's what you need to do. Ignore the vehicle and look for the nugget of truth because what's in there is a life-giving rebuke in there somewhere. Take that and try to ignore the vehicle." Because sometimes God is saying something you need to hear and if you deal with your hurt or you respond with your "I'm being misunderstood," if you become defensive, then you miss that.

As a pastor if someone leaves our church and they're unhappy, the first thing I say is, "I wonder if we did something wrong. I wonder if there's some different way we could be more effective. I wonder if there's something we could change in order to be more effective," instead of saying, "Oh that person's just immature. That person has a problem." I want to evaluate myself first. I want to be among the wise. I want to grasp the idea.

There are sometimes when people correct you or me and they do it in a way that's poor. Young people, listen to this. Sometimes your mom or dad might yell at you and instead of becoming defensive you need to be able to say, "Okay. I know the way they did it wasn't the best, but if there's something in there that I can gain and learn from this, good things can happen."

We always want to ask the question, what can we learn from this? What did we do wrong? Or if it wasn't wrong necessarily, it's how could I do better next time. You can tell a lot about the person by how they receive correction.

In fact what I want to do now is I want to go through my study that I did when I was in my early twenties. I want to share with you a wisdom test and I want to take you through seven characters from the book of Proverbs.

I went through and in the Hebrew language I went through each one of the characters to try to understand them and how they respond to sin and how they respond to correction. This for me was fascinating. I hope it's as fascinating to you.

I was wondering today after I was done preparing this message if the fascination for this was partly in my discovery. I discovered it for myself. I didn't get it out of a commentary. I did my study and discovered it and I'm going, "Whoa! This is really cool!" I'm not sure you'll have the same benefit, but I'm going to share it with you anyway because I think it's really good stuff that I think might be helpful.

Here's the question – am I wise? There are seven characters in the book of Proverbs and they respond in different ways and they're in a progression. There are seven characters and we're going to start with the worst first, we're going to move to the best. I'm going to show you how they respond to sin and I'm going to show you how they respond to correction, and we're going to take it right out of the Bible.

Now today I'm not going to share with you, for the sake of time, the verses that talk about how they respond to sin. I put them in parenthesis in your handout or in the column in your handout, but the passages that deal with correction are coming right out of the Bible, so I want you to see where they are.

Let's look and see how people respond to them. We are going to stay in our passage here first. We're going to talk about the wicked person. That's the person who's promoting evil. That's like the prostitute who's trying to solicit a person. This is like the drug dealer who's trying to get other people involved. This is the person who's trying to draw other people into sin. That's the wicked person. They promote sin.

You can see in our verse from today in Proverbs 9:7 that this person when you correct them they abuse you. That's what the words are. They abuse you. If you look at the verse for today it says *whoever rebukes the wicked incurs abuse*. That's what's going to take place. You just need to know that.

You're going to have to evaluate do I correct this person? But more importantly you want to ask yourself, when someone corrects me do I respond with abuse? Because if you are then you're kind of playing in the wicked area.

I would suggest in my own life that I find myself in each one of these at different times. So you don't want to say, "Oh I'm always this person." Sometimes I find myself as the wicked person or the fool or whatever, and it's just a reminder for me to move down to the wise person to be that kind of a person in my life that God wants me to be.

Let's go to the second person. Notice the second person is the mocker. Now the mocker laughs at sin. This is the person who thinks it's really funny when someone else is doing something wrong and people get hurt. This is the person who thinks it's really funny to make a particular kind of joke that's damaging to other people. This is the person who really thinks it's funny to tease someone to the point of hurting them. That's the mocker. They're not sensitive to sin, they laugh at sin and they're a dangerous person, the mocker.

So notice what happens to them when you correct them. If you see in the passage it says that *whoever corrects a mocker invites insults*. So we can see that in this particular passage that the mocker is going to insult you when you correct them. Be careful. You've got to evaluate the receptiveness of the person. You can't just go correct someone. You have to measure whether that person's going to be responsive or not when you correct them. And then certainly when someone corrects you don't want to be on that side of insulting people because they've corrected you, even if they do it wrong. That's a mocker's response.

Let's go to another person in the book of Proverbs. Let's look at the fool. The fool is a person who plays with sin. This is the person who tries it out. "Oh it's okay. I can play with this. In fact the authorities in my life, the parents, the school, the government, the police, they're all my enemies. They're all the people in my way of playing around. I want to just enjoy myself." Sometimes young people find themselves experimenting with things because they're just being the fool. They're moving in that direction and they're playing with sin. The person who plays with sin gets hurt. It's not a good place to be.

It's an interesting thing in the Bible when you look at the seven characters that are mentioned in the book of Proverbs where does a child start on the list? Does a child start as a wicked person? No, I don't think so. But the next one's the naïve person and kind of in the middle. I don't think the person when they're born starts at the naïve person either.

If you look at a verse in the Bible, I'm not going to show it you right now, but it's in Proverbs 22:15. It says this: *foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child*. That tells me that when a child is born they have this desire to play with sin. They have a desire, a bent to do the wrong thing and they need correction.

The rest of the passage talks about correction, how important it is in Proverbs 22:15. That's why correction is so important with children because their bent inside is to start playing with sin. They need to know this. That's why it's so important, young people, to grab on to this idea because you don't want to be this person who's playing with sin like a fool.

Notice what they do according to the passage in Proverbs 15:5. *A fool spurns his father's discipline*. *Spurns* means he pushes it off. He rejects it. So when you try to correct a fool, they reject the correction.

There are sometimes when you're placed in a position of authority. You're a manager in a business, you're a parent of someone and they're responding in these poor ways. What do you do? Do you just not correct them? No, you still have to correct them, but you have to realize what you're going into because you're going to incur abuse. They may reject your correction; you still have to do it. You have a responsibility in that situation to correct them. But you just need to know and see on the map where they are because any way that you can help them understand that and move forward would be great.

We're trying to call people with the call to wisdom to move toward a response to correction that we're going to see in a bit that I think is strategic. So that's the third one, the fool.

Let's go to the fourth one. Of our seven characters, this is the one in the middle. This is like the person who doesn't know anything. They're simple, they're naïve. That's why I say here the simple person is vulnerable to sin.

We saw a couple chapters ago in Proverbs 7 about the foolish man who gets sucked into the strange woman's house. He just doesn't realize it and he's walking into a trap. Like a bird being

caught in a snare or a deer being caught in a noose, he's just walking into the trap. He doesn't realize it. He's vulnerable to sin.

So if you look at Proverbs 22:3 you'll see some information about the fool. *The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.* They ignore correction. They ignore the warning signs. They don't see them. They're not aware of them, and so they just ignore the correction and they find themselves in serious trouble. That's the simple person. We need to be careful of that because sometimes we start saying, "I'm not going to listen to that," and we get ourselves into trouble.

The next person in line is the prudent person. If you've been with us during the study of Proverbs you know that there are three key words that bring us out of the noise of life. What are they? Anybody know? Knowledge, then understanding, and wisdom. Those three words – knowledge, understanding, and wisdom – are going to move us out of the noise of life and the next three people that we're going to look at are a person attached to knowledge, then a person attached to understanding, and a person who's attached to wisdom.

We're going to see those three same concepts developed here again in chapter 9 of Proverbs in a different way talking about particular people (not just in Proverbs, but all through the book) talking about different people.

We talked about the simple person, now we're to the prudent person and the prudent person knows the danger of sin. It's about knowledge; he knows the danger. This is great because he knows the danger of sin.

So what's his response? Proverbs 15:5 says that he listens to correction. Look at this. It says, *A fool spurns a parent's discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.* He listens to it. He heeds it. He pays attention to it.

I certainly want to be that person. You want to correct me; you're giving me a gift. Please, correct me. If you see something I'm doing wrong, I want to know it. That's what the prudent person says because it raises them up out of the noise so they have some knowledge.

Sometimes we don't even know what we're doing wrong. We need someone to correct us and help us. That's the prudent person. The next person we want to look at is the understanding person. The understanding person sees through sin to the end result.

The word understanding is the *biyn* in Hebrew. It means to perceive from afar. In other words, to see the results. Sometimes we use the word 'discerning.' They can discern what's going on to the final product. That's the person who can see a future consequence of current actions.

So when it comes to sin, this person can see through the sin to the final consequences and that is a gift. In fact, there is a spiritual gift called the gift of discernments. In order to see past what you've got in front of you to the future.

The understanding person is a person who can do that and so the verse here – *a rebuke impresses a discerning person*. I underlined *discerning* because that's our word understanding, that's our word *biyn* there. It's translated discerning in the New International Version, but it's the word understanding, the same word used in our progression of words that we have. That's why I underlined it.

A rebuke impresses a discerning person more than a hundred lashes a fool. He is impressed. He's impressed by correction. It makes an impression on him. Boy, I want to be that kind of person, when someone corrects me and makes an impression on me.

And then lastly is the wise person. The wise person when responding to sin is a person who gets rid of sin. Proverbs says that the *wise king winnows out the evil*. He gets rid of the evil because he knows the evil is going to be damage.

If you're in a home, a classroom, if you have in your own private life, you want to get rid of the sin. We've already seen that the wise person hates evil. He gets rid of that in his life. He moves it out of his life and that's really strategic, but his response to correction is the epitome. I really like this. He's the one who will not only respond well to the correction but to the corrector.

See that? Proverbs 9:8 – *rebuke the wise and they will love you*. That's the verse there. Notice that the wise person is the one who's going to love you. You correct him and he says, "Oh thank you for that. I am really grateful that you would challenge me. I am really grateful that you would share that information to me." That's the kind of person I want to be. So I made a commitment in my teenage years to try to do that.

It's hard sometimes when the way some people correct is just really painful. You feel misunderstood, you feel like you didn't even do anything wrong sometimes. You're going, "I don't really understand this." So it's really hard. But I would suggest that that's what the wise person says. That's what I'm working toward in my life. I want to do that. Because I'm convinced that the wise person is the person who loves correction. Correct me. I can learn from that. It's a valuable thing for me. I can learn, I can be taught.

Back to our passage in Proverbs 9:7 – does this mean you never correct a mocker? No. It does not mean that. If we go to another verse in Proverbs it will illustrate this.

Proverbs 21:11 says, *When a mocker is punished, when he's corrected, the simple gain wisdom; by paying attention to the wise they get knowledge*. When the mocker is punished, the simple gain wisdom. If you have a store, you're a manager of a store and you have to punish someone in the store. You know they're a mocker, but you might do it anyway because you know there are simple people around there listening.

Sometimes when I'm working in a group and I know I'm dealing with one person and their question, I know my answer to that question isn't important as the other people who are listening. So when someone challenges me when I'm lecturing somewhere around the country, if someone were to challenge me publicly, I know as I respond to them that my response to them is not for them, it's for the other people that are listening.

The same thing is true when you rebuke a mocker – other people are watching and going forward. So what we're learning here in Proverbs 9 is it places a high value on readiness to consider one's errors in life, to recognize that we have blind spots. We don't realize we have blind spots. There's other ways to live life. We can do something different. God is doing something good in our lives.

Now those corrective words in the verse we just read are good, but they are followed well by this next verse. So back to Proverbs 9, we're going to go to verse 10 and it talks about the fear of the Lord. It says, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

This is so important because if we understand wisdom the way God has presented it in the book of Proverbs, it's not just good ideas. Proverbs starts with the fear of the Lord. It's recognizing that God put wisdom all throughout His creation, it's His way of living life, and so we start with the fear of the Lord, we tie ourselves in.

Here's what the fear of the Lord is. The fear of the Lord, number one, recognizes that God is the designer of our lives. Number two, the fear of the Lord is respecting or fearing that. Respecting God so much that we place ourselves under His leadership and control. That is the fear of the Lord and that is the beginning of wisdom. So when we're responding to correction or whatever, we need to understand that.

The second part of the verse says *knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.* Understanding God's holiness is understanding. Wow. That's amazing. That's what we're trying to work on in our lives.

As we continue on in Proverbs 9:11 it says, *For through wisdom your days will be many, and years will be added to your life. If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer.* This is going to be a key verse that you will use for the rest of your life.

See, if you are wise your wisdom's going to reward you. You do not need external motivation. You don't have to get paid to get a good grade in your class this week. You don't have to get paid for that because you'll do well and the satisfaction of doing a good job, that's your reward. You've done well. You don't have to get paid, you don't have to have an external motivation to do well. It's the internal motivation of being wise that blesses you as you're tying in and you know this works. I am so glad I am doing what I'm doing because that's your reward.

But the second part is really important. *If you are a mocker, you alone will suffer.* Sometimes you will feel mistreated in life. Someone will laugh at you, they will insult you, they will hurt you, they will misunderstand you, they will do all kinds of thing to hurt you.

You want to get back at them, but you need to know you don't have to get back at them. You can turn them over to the Lord. "Lord, you take care of this. I'm giving it to you," because that

person's greatest punishment is they have to live with themselves. They alone will suffer. And so we don't have to punish them thinking we've got to get justice. Turn it over to the Lord.

If you are a mocker, you alone will suffer, it says in verse 12. Save that verse because the next time you're mistreated pull it out because you want to get revenge. You do not have to balance the scales of justice. Give it to the Lord. That person's greatest punishment is that they have to live with themselves.

Now let's go to the last call, the call of the foolish person starting in verse 13. *Folly is an unruly woman; she is simple and knows nothing. She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city, calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way.*

When I was in Kenya as a missionary (some of you have experienced this if you've been in a third world), you go to the marketplace and there are these little shops. In Kenya they were called the Blue Dukas. Dukas refer to the blue stands, a little house. And blue, they repainted everything blue in Kenya. So everything publicly you see painted blue. It's kind of weird. But anyway they're called Blue Dukas.

You walk through the Blue Dukas and people are calling out, "Come over here, buddy! We have good junk here!" I'm thinking, "Yeah, I'm sure you do have good junk." But they're all calling out and they want you to barter with them and dicker with them. So they're calling from their stalls.

That's the message that's going out from the call of the wise, the call of the fool, and you've got to pick where am I going to go here.

So she's calling out. Look at what she says. Very similar message to the wise. If you compare these passages it's very interesting. She says, *"Let all who are simple come to my house!"* Just like the wise person says.

To those who have no sense she says, "Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!" But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are deep in the realm of the dead.

Who is the simple person? Remember, the simple person is the naïve person. The wise person's calling out, "You don't have very much information and understanding. Come to me. I'll give you wisdom." The foolish person's calling out to that person too. You've got two calls. They're out there every day. The call of the wise, the call of the fool. Which one are you going to pay attention to?

The interesting thing is they look very much the same out there sometimes. That's because the fool designs the call to look like the wise one to get us into it. So they look very similar.

Notice both women (they're personified as women here) are calling out to the simple minded. Both are calling from the high point of the city. Both are giving an invitation. But those are the surface similarities. There are some important differences and those differences are noticeable, so we have no excuse for confusing the two. Let's see the difference between them.

First of all, the foolish woman is loud. She's loud, boisterous, obnoxious. Secondly, she's without discipline, notice it says. So when the call goes out, you need to look at the person who's giving the call. Is this person disciplined in their finances? Are they disciplined in their personal health and hygiene? Are they disciplined in their approach to responsibility? Are they disciplined in their relationship? Just look at the message. Or are they just calling you out to have fun? "Come on, let's go have fun!" Ask the question. What can you see behind there?

Notice it says she is without real knowledge. She doesn't have that. She doesn't have real knowledge. She doesn't have the real truth. Notice it says she calls out to those *who go straight on their way*.

Here's what I imagine. Our Christian kids grow up and they get out of high school and they go to college. They know what the straight way is. So they're walking on their straight way, but they don't have wisdom and so they're usually leered off the path by the fool who's saying, "Come over here and have fun! Got a lot of good ideas here!" So they get themselves into trouble, you see.

We need to do whatever we can to empower people, whether it's adults, young people. We all need this in order to be ready so they aren't lured away by the call of the fool.

Notice also she values secrecy. She says, "*Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!*" Beware of those people who want to keep it a secret about what's really going on, whether it's in a relationship or an organization. If you're hearing the call of the wise, it's an open, honest call. The call of folly always means deceit and secrecy.

Now notice the last verse, verse 18 because she leaves out this very important detail in her call. Notice verse 18 it says she fails to mention that all the guests at her party are dead. They're dead. "Come and have stolen food. Stolen water is sweet. Come." But you get there and you're sitting down at the table (just imagine the picture; she's giving us the picture) and you say, "Will you please pass the stolen mashed potatoes?" You look over and the person's a corpse. I mean Steven Spielberg would have a great field day with this.

In fact I would suggest this. Here we are eating our food, here's a person eating his yummy mummy chocolates. Chocolate whatever those are. He orders Count Chocula – I don't know if these are real cereals or not. I don't eat that kind of stuff. Are these real? These are real cereals. So there he's eating his cereals having a great time. And then he says, "Hey will you please pass the milk?" He looks up.

This is the picture of people who get sucked into this. "Come on, be my friend. Come over here, have some of this foolishness. Enjoy it. Lots of pleasure here." You get into that and you start eating. "Ooh this tastes really good. Really good cereal." You look up and all the people are dead around you. That's the thing that's happening. That's the warning that goes out for us.

More people need to know this message. More people need to know that God has designed our world. He's embedded wisdom in it and we need to make a choice.

I want to encourage you today if you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. That is your first choice. You choose Jesus Christ. Come under this umbrella of allow God to work in your life. Man, that is the most important thing you could ever do.

It's powerful what God wants to do in our lives. Christ's death on the cross gives us the power to apply His blood to our lives to change us from the inside out. He's the one that's building the wisdom inside of us because there's power in this wisdom mentioned in the book of Proverbs. It's not good enough to be right; we also need to be wise in our lives. I don't know if you're blessed by that as much as I am, but let me tell you I'm excited. I look at this and I go, "Wow. This is so inspiring to me."

I know I've taken you on a tour through this, haven't stayed right in chapter 9, but next week we'll go on to chapter 10. We're going to hit a bunch of random stuff, so then you're really going to get some tours of the Bible as we go forward.

I want to ask you just for a moment to pause and think about what God's doing in your own heart. Maybe He's convicting you of something in your life that needs to change. Maybe it's an area where you need to give your life over to Him. Maybe there's something you need to do that will help you draw closer to the Lord. Or maybe He's inviting you to accept Him this morning as your Lord and Savior and you want to make that decision.

In a moment we're going to sing a song, and when we do we're going to have some prayer counselors right over here ready to pray for you. Those prayer counselors are available for you to go to any Sunday. They're there because they're ready to pray. Sometimes we just want some prayer. We need to rely on someone else's faith for an area of our life. If God is speaking to you today as we sing this next song, I just want you to get up and go over and pray with them and allow them to pray with you. If you'd like to accept Jesus Christ in your life, go and pray with them. They'll help you get to know Jesus Christ in that very personal way. Most strategic decision you'll ever make in your life.

Let's stand and pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we come before you because you are the God of the universe. You are the Creator God who's placed wisdom within your creation for us to discover and follow and enjoy. You're the Almighty God who has empowered our world to be what it is, to set it in motion, and to do all those magnificent things. But you are also the Father God for each one of us. You care for us. You care for our hearts. You love us. And Lord, right now we thank you for that love. We need it. We fall on your grace. We need that grace in our hearts and lives. Lord, we need our souls to be refreshed and drawn to you. We know that your name is strategic. We know that calling upon your name changes everything that we are, everything that we want to be. We call on your name. We dedicate ourselves to you. May we make that name the most important thing in our lives, that name of Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name, amen.