

Listen to Wisdom's Invitation
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Proverbs 8 and 9

Almost a year ago the legendary country singer George Jones passed away. George Jones was known worldwide for two things: The way he could sing a song with his unique and unusual style and voice. **Anyone know what else he was known for?** George Jones was known for living out the very worst things that many country songs portray. Alcoholism, drug abuse, broken marriages, irresponsibility, Financial mismanagement, all of these are a defining part of his story.

I've been with George when he was at his best, and at his worst. I've watched a disappointed, angry crowd's reaction when he didn't show up (they called him "No Show Jones" for a reason!) And I've helped to almost carry him on stage when he was barely sober enough to perform.

In his later years they say he found the Lord, and I hope that was true. Also in his older years he recorded some music that very transparently talked about his struggles. One song was called "Choices". Listen to the words:

*I've had choices
Since the day that I was born
There were voices
That told me right from wrong
If I had listened
No I wouldn't be here today
Living and dying
With the choices I made*
(Written by Billy Yates and Mike Curtis)

- Ever been around someone that has lived a life of bad choices?
- We all have. Sometimes you can spot them by the evidence of the consequences in their confused disordered life. Sometimes you can spot them by their very physical appearance.
- Do you have a picture in your mind? Maybe you have a specific person in your mind.
- So here's a question for you: **When we can so evidently see the consequences of a life of bad choices, why are we still tempted to make bad choices?**
- **Whenever someone has to make a choice between good and evil, how do they portray that in movies or cartoons?**
- In chapters 8 and 9 of Proverbs Solomon used a similar literary device. In these two chapters he contrasts two women one representing wisdom and the other representing folly. One representing a life of good choices, the other representing a life of bad choices. Lady wisdom is a noble woman of virtue who wants to teach a young man the right way to live. The woman folly is a harlot, a prostitute who wants to seduce the foolish young man into poor choices.
- This lesson is about making choices every day.
- We can choose to live the way of the wise. Or we can choose to be a fool.
- And because of our sin nature it's not as easy to choose to be wise as we might think.

- In fact I would tell you it is impossible to choose the way of the wise without having the Holy Spirit living within us.
- But, there's GOOD NEWS. It's never too late because we serve a God of second chances.
- So let's look at these verses and meet these two women, a LADY named Wisdom and a HARLOT named Folly:

Proverbs 8:1–6 (ESV)

8 Does not wisdom call?

Does not understanding raise her voice?

2 On the heights beside the way,
at the crossroads she takes her stand;

3 beside the gates in front of the town,
at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud:

4 "To you, O men, I call,
and my cry is to the children of man.

5 O simple ones, learn prudence;
O fools, learn sense.

6 Hear, for I will speak noble things,
and from my lips will come what is right,

- **Based on verses 1-3, would you say Lady Wisdom is like?**
- **Verse 1: Why would Lady Wisdom need to raise her voice?**
- **What do those verses tell us about the AVAILABILITY of Godly wisdom?**
- **How does God make His wisdom known to people today?**
- **What are some "competing voices" that try to drown out God's call to wisdom?**
- **Verse 5: To whom does Lady Wisdom make her appeal?**
- Verse 5: The "simple" are naive, gullible, and haven't been taught.
- The "fool" has had instruction but has chosen not to use it.
- Elsewhere in Proverbs we also hear of the "scoffer." That's a person who doesn't just neglect the wisdom of God but REJECTS and HATES God's wisdom and salvation. There's no hope for a "scoffer."
- The good news is that "Jesus Christ wants to engage everyone, including fools who have made many mistakes." (Ray Ortlund) So there's hope for all of us!

Proverbs 9:13–17 (ESV)

The Way of Folly

13 The woman Folly is loud;
she is seductive and knows nothing.

14 She sits at the door of her house;
she takes a seat on the highest places of the town,

15 calling to those who pass by,
who are going straight on their way,

16 "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!"
And to him who lacks sense she says,

17 "Stolen water is sweet,
and bread eaten in secret is pleasant."

- Verse 13: She's LOUD, SEDUCTIVE, and IGNORANT. The old folks would have called this woman a "brazen hussy!"

- **What similarities do you see between how the woman Folly and Lady Wisdom interact with those who are “simple” ?**
- **Verse 17: What does “stolen water” and “bread eaten in secret” mean?** (See Prov. 5:15-17)
- Isn't it amazing that from a distance, the seduction of sin looks like an OBVIOUS bad choice.
- The problem is when you are UP CLOSE and in the midst of temptation the consequences are out of focus. **So, what's the lesson in that for us?**

To avoid temptation of the harlot “Folly,” stay out of the “red light” district! Stay far away from where the temptation is! The closer we get to temptation the harder it is to see the consequences.

As we turn back to chapter 8, beginning in verse 17 we see the benefits of choosing WISDOM. Lady Wisdom says...

Proverbs 8:17–21 (ESV)

17 I love those who love me,
and those who seek me diligently find me.

18 Riches and honor are with me,
enduring wealth and righteousness.

19 My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold,
and my yield than choice silver.

20 I walk in the way of righteousness,
in the paths of justice,

21 granting an inheritance to those who love me,
and filling their treasuries.

Proverbs 8:32–36 (ESV)

32 “And now, O sons, listen to me:
blessed are those who keep my ways.

33 Hear instruction and be wise,
and do not neglect it.

34 Blessed is the one who listens to me,
watching daily at my gates,
waiting beside my doors.

35 For whoever finds me finds life
and obtains favor from the Lord,

36 but he who fails to find me injures himself;
all who hate me love death.”

- **Verse 17: What does the word “diligently” mean? What does it mean to do something “diligently?” What does verse 17 promise?** Hint: “Love” here is not a feeling but an ACTION! What if we substituted the word “embrace” for “love?”

“If we will EMBRACE the wisdom of God...the wisdom of God will EMBRACE us.” “If we hold on to the wisdom of God...the wisdom of God will hold on to us.”

- Verse 18: **Do you think this means if you choose Godly wisdom you'll get rich? What is “enduring wealth?”**

The wisdom of God is not a get rich quick scheme. But being wise can help us to be good stewards of what God has given us. More importantly, followers of Christ are promised ETERNAL REWARD that is “better than gold!”

- Verses 17-21 and 32-36 speak to the benefits of living a life of Godly wisdom.
- In other words, growing in our walk with God, or SANCTIFICATION.
- I believe they also speak to SALVATION. We can easily say this is a description of the benefits of knowing Christ as Savior and Lord. Especially verses 35-36:

35 For whoever finds me finds life
and obtains favor from the Lord,
36 but he who fails to find me injures himself;
all who hate me love death.”

- Let me give a word of caution about seeing Lady Wisdom as a picture of Christ.
- There is a theological term known as “typology.” “Whenever we talk about a type, we mean an Old Testament picture of the person and work of Christ.” (Example: The brazen serpent in the Old Testament,) (MacArthur).
- One of the great questions about Proverbs 8 is whether you could substitute Jesus for Lady Wisdom. It would seem to make sense if you look back at these verses. But there is a problem.
- Look at 8:22. That verse indicates that God created Lady Wisdom as his “first” creation.
- Jesus is NOT A CREATED BEING. He always was, is, and always will be the eternal Son of God. What we CAN safely do, is consider that Christ IS THE WISDOM OF GOD. (1 Cor. 1:24)

So, What’s the Takeaway?

Like the song said, we all have “choices.” And we will be either “living or dying” with the choices we make. This week as we live our lives I hope we’ll imagine those two women trying to influence our choices. I hope we’ll run TO Godly wisdom and AWAY from the temptation of folly.

If Christ is the WISDOM of God, then making the choice to accept His free gift of salvation, and to grow daily in our relationship with Him as Savior and Lord is THE wisest choice of all. If you haven’t made that choice you can today. For those of us who have, our job this week is to “diligently” seek to live like Jesus in the choices we make.