

IT'S TIME TO DECIDE

Proverbs 9:1-18

WISDOM'S TABLE

1 Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn her seven pillars. 2 She has slaughtered her beasts; she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table.

All throughout the first half of Proverbs, Wisdom is personified as dignified woman who calls all who will listen to learn her ways so that they can live a life of wisdom. Now, we get an invitation to a meal at her house.

To prepare for the meal, Lady Wisdom has slaughtered the animals and mixed the wine. This doesn't mean watered down — this means honey and spices have been added to make the wine even better.

This is no ordinary meal. This is a feast of celebration. In the ancient world, most meals didn't include meat and well-mixed wine. That luxury was reserved for special guests, celebrations, and holy meals.

3 She has sent out her young women to call from the highest places in the town, 4 "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" To him who lacks sense she says, 5 "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. 6 Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight."

The Hebrew word for "simple" here refers to someone who is inexperienced and needing instruction. They are malleable — capable of being shaped and molded by whoever gets his attention — potential for great good or frightening harm...It's a life hanging in the balance. And both wisdom and folly are competing for their attention, affection, and allegiance.

So what's the price of admission to this feast?

Leave behind your simple ways and walk in the way of insight. You have to come with humility and teachability. You have to be willing to say — I don't know. You have to be willing to receive instruction and learn a new way of living.

We have to be willing to change — our beliefs, our values, our behaviors, our influences — everything. We have to be willing to redefine what is good, true, and beautiful. We have to be willing to unlearn so that we can relearn. We have to be willing to turn away from our old ways and turn toward a new way of living.

We have to see that our souls won't be satisfied until they are satisfied in God.

Psalm 63:5

My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips,

That's the offer on the table. An invitation into a relationship with God where our souls can be satisfied and we express our delight and gratitude with praise and joy.

FOLLY'S TRAP

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."

Folly raises her voice to distract — then she brings it to a seductive whisper to draw us in. She sits idly at her door calling to those who are passing by. Folly loves to derail those striving for the the straight and narrow pathway to wisdom's house.

The call is identical to Wisdom's — "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here." Both make their speeches from the high places. Both even offer food and make promises. — But the invitations are not identical.

The Woman Folly is inactive — sitting idly at the doorway. She's loud, noisy, and ignorant. She uses seduction to lure her guests. Instead of preparing a feast — she's stolen bread and water. Not only is it a meager meal — she delights in the fact that it's stolen.

Raymond Van Leeuwen in his book on Proverbs wrote,

"Folly and sin are always parasitic of the good that God by Wisdom has made. Folly takes the goods and destroys their goodness by ripping them from their proper place...Folly has not built her house; she has stolen it."

Folly is a smuggler — a thief — a liar. She stands against everything that God stands for. Lady Wisdom offers an abundant feast — representative of everything you could want in life — meaning, satisfaction, freedom, identity, hope, joy, peace, purpose.

Folly seduces by the attraction of what's forbidden and done in secret. Folly lures her victims into her trap by telling half-truths and lies. She'll do whatever she can to convince you that sin gives pleasure and that you can wiggle out of the consequences or avoid them all together.

Folly offers false promises and disappointment, a life of emptiness and dissatisfaction. But it's even worse than that. Look at verse 18.

18 But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

And now, we see that what looks like a table — is really a trap. Tables are meant to bring people together to dine and to be encouraged and filled. This table is a trap. It's a table of death.

Pastor Tim Keller writes...

"To miss out on life, then, is to enter the realm of death before your physical life on earth is ended. To live a life cut off from god, with ever-increasing spiritual blindness, brittleness, and hardness is to become a spiritual corpse. Folly's guests reside deep in the realm of the dead."

And do you want to know the great irony and tragedy of Solomon's life? He didn't listen very well to his own wisdom. If you read his biography in 1 Kings you see that at the end of his life, he delighted in women, and not the Lord. He took many wives and concubines. And the Bible says that "Solomon clung to these in love." And many of the women he delighted in worshipped other gods and before long — he worshipped false gods too.

1 Kings 11:4

For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.

See even Solomon — who was one of the wisest men to ever live — was distracted and seduced by folly.

So how will we decide which threshold we'll cross? At first the decision seems like a no-brainer. Of course we'll choose the better table. Of course we'll choose wisdom. Of course we'll choose life.

But our track record shows that in the day to day reality of life — we often choose folly over wisdom, death over life. So how can we make the right decision? Let's look at verses 7-12 to find the key.

DECISION'S THRESHOLD

7 Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. 8 Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you. 9 Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning. 11 For by me your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life. 12 If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you scoff, you alone will bear it.

This middle section is the Threshold of Decision. It provides the key to unlocking our hearts and ultimately how we'll decide whose invitation to take. So let's unpack it together.

First, Solomon lays out two types of people — the scoffer and the wise man.

The Scoffer in Proverbs is a person who is full of themselves. They are prideful, arrogant, and contemptuous of others. A scoffer submits to no authority but his own and despises correction of any kind. If you try to correct and instruct a scoffer — Solomon says — watch out — because you could incur injury. In their own insecurity — they will insult you, dishonor you and could even physically lash out at you. And the scoffer in the end will be responsible for his own life of misery.

The wise man in Proverbs has come to see humility and teachability as the pathways to wisdom. They welcome correction and instruction so that he can continue to grow in wisdom. The wise person understands that when it comes to wisdom — you never arrive — there's always more to learn. And in the end, the wise person will experience abundant life —both in quantity and in quality.

10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

Solomon finishes his last wisdom lesson where he began — The Fear of the Lord.

To fear the Lord means that God is your highest priority, your deepest love, and your foundational trust. God has your highest attention, affection, and allegiance.

To fear of the Lord means that we have an attitude of submission and obedience, dependence and joy, respect and worship.

On the surface, the decision seems like a no brainer...That's because in theory — the right answer or the right choice is obvious. It's not a lack of information — It's not that wisdom is hard to find — It's that it's hard to pursue.

Our problem is that deep down — we're all scoffers.

In our pride we want to do things our own way and we really don't like someone — especially God — to tell us how to live. Theologians call this condition that the Bible describes — Original Sin. We're born with a bent towards scoffing and folly. When our first parents sinned in the Garden of Eden, sin was infused into our DNA.

Here's some Bible to help show you what I mean...

Psalm 14:2-3

The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Ephesians 2:1–3

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Rom 3:10 as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God...18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

These are just a few of the many passages that teach that there’s something broken inside each and every one of us down at the heart level.

Pastor Ray Ortlund writes...

We were born complicated. We were born with a bias toward folly. We were born guilty. Theologians call it Original Sin, and it is real. It explains why our wills are unfree. It explains why even obvious choices can be difficult or impossible. Our hearts are corrupt down beneath the level of choice. So, just knowing the right thing to do is not always enough

We don’t choose the right or obvious thing because we’re broken. That’s why this decision can feel paralyzing. To make the right decision — to choose to fear the Lord and make him the object of our greatest attention, affection, and allegiance requires more than just information — It requires transformation.

We need a transformation of our desires.

And here’s the beauty of the Gospel. God understands human history better than we ever could.

He knows that our hearts are broken and that we need a heart transplant. He knows that on our own, we would never seek after him nor desire him.

And that’s precisely why he came to seek after us.

John 3:16–17

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

And Jesus himself summed up his mission this way...

Luke 5:31–32

And Jesus answered them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

And again...

Luke 19:10

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

God the Father, sent God the Son — Jesus Christ to seek and save the lost. To be the great physician to those who are sick with sin. God pursues us and the question before us is — How will we respond?

Will we scoff and continue on our own way?

Or will we humble ourselves before a holy God. Will we see him as the greater object of our affection and satisfaction and begin to repent — where we turn away from sin and the house of folly and turn toward God and enter the house of wisdom.

As the old hymn says —

“If you tarry till you’re better, you will never come at all.”

Christ is inviting us to come now to receive his very best. Jesus is God’s true wisdom who prepared a feast not at cost to you and me — but at cost to himself. He is the slaughtered lamb of God who takes away our sin so that everyone who hungers and thirst can come to the house of wisdom and eat — be filled — satisfied and truly live.

Isaiah 55:1–3a

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live...”