



Proverbs chapter 8:1-9:18

Taught at our Sunday evening service, 26th September 2021 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: Psalm 119:97-104

Good evening. Let's pray.

Introduction

We are studying the book of Proverbs, and over the last 3 weeks we've covered the first 7 chapters. Tonight we'll conclude the first of the sections we can divide the book into, so as a reminder, here's how it is laid out...

- Wisdom and folly contrasted, Chapters 1–9
- Proverbs of Solomon, Chapters 10–24 — (Written and set in order by himself)
- Proverbs of Solomon, Chapters 25–29 — (Set in order by men of Hezekiah)
- Oracle of Agur, Unknown Sage, Chapter 30
- Proverbs of a Mother to Lemuel, Chapter 31

So tonight, we'll study chapters 8 and 9, and from here on in, we'll be studying 2 chapters a week until the middle of December.

In this first section, we've seen wisdom and its effects described. We've seen the stupidity of foolishness exposed. And tonight, we'll once again be told by God's Word that wisdom is calling for our attention - and that we need to both listen and apply it to our lives. But as we'll see at the end of chapter 9, it's not the only voice calling for our attention. And that, my friends, is the challenge we all face; to know what and who to listen to.

Tonight we'll see wisdom described as if they were a person, one that we should pay attention to, and that is the third time that this has happened in Proverbs so far, after Solomon did so in chapters 1 and 3. And to give you a preview of what's ahead this evening, and perhaps a way of remembering what these chapters contain, here's a breakdown of chapters 8 and 9...

Overview of chapter eight

In chapter 8, we see in the first 11 verses that...

- v1-11 - Wisdom is available and valuable
- v12-21 - The character of wisdom
- v22-31 - Wisdom is foundational
- v32-36 - Listen up!

Overview of chapter nine

In chapter 9, we'll see that theme of listening continuing...

- v1-6 Wisdom is calling (see 1:20-33)
- v7-12 Your reaction says everything
- v13-18 Wisdom isn't the only one calling

Chapter eight

Now, as we begin chapter 8, I want to come back to a point I shared in our opening study, that some look at the book of Proverbs as a journey through a man's life - from his formative years, making many decisions, through to looking back on his life and seeing the blessings of wisdom and the mistakes of foolishness in his life.

And I mention it again as I think that can be a helpful aid in understanding the structure of the book, perhaps in applying it too. J Vernon McGee is one commentator who holds this opinion, and says:

The young man has been examining the literature of the different colleges; and the school of wisdom and the school of fools are bidding for his application. In this chapter it is wisdom that sends out an invitation to him with a note of urgency. Pressure is put upon the young man now. The school bell is going to ring before long, and they want this young man enrolled.

J Vernon-McGee

And certainly we'll see the calls of both wisdom and foolishness in these chapters.

However, I'm on the fence when it comes to viewing the book as this progression through life - I can see the help, but I also have a reservation for I don't want anyone to think part of the book doesn't apply to their life, age, or stage right now. It is all relevant. So whether you are 18 or 80 - every word in these chapters was written for your learning too.

. . .

In the first 3 verses we read...

Proverbs 8:1-3

Does not wisdom cry out,
And understanding lift up her voice?
She takes her stand on the top of the high hill,
Beside the way, where the paths meet.
She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city,
At the entrance of the doors:

That is, wisdom is not some secret knowledge available to the few - but rather publicly available to all. Everywhere you go, everywhere you go in - whether in public, or in private - wisdom is readily available to you.

However, obtaining wisdom still requires some effort on your part. As has been well said, many people might have attained wisdom had they not assumed they already had it.

Jesus said:

Matthew 5:6

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled.

So don't sit back and think you know it all. But rather, seek after wisdom - not the wisdom of this world, but God's wisdom. Hunger and thirst for righteousness. It's there waiting for you.

As we go through these two chapters, we'll see that wisdom cries, stands, calls, speaks, reproves, abhors sin, admonishes, searches, hates evil, counsels, advises, loves, leads, blesses, rejoices, delights, builds, cooks (or prepares), plans and invites.

But will you listen? We read in verse 4...

Proverbs 8:4-5

To you, O men, I call,
And my voice is to the sons of men.
O you simple ones, understand prudence,
And you fools, be of an understanding heart.

This call is to all of us. And change is possible. No-one has to remain a fool. But action, and effort are required. Last week in chapter 7 we looked at the young man who was devoid of understanding, who made a series of wrong steps - and that wasn't a reflection of his intellect, but his effort. He had failed to get understanding, to get wisdom, to apply it to his life.

And note the specific calls here - first to understand prudence - to think through the situation and the likely consequences of your actions - and second, not to be of an understanding mind, but to be of an understanding heart.

Of course, this isn't the first time we've been reminded of the important of our hearts - not to be led by them, but to lead them. And throughout Proverbs there is a series of commandments concerning the heart. Finnis Dake lists 18 of those in his Bible commentary - and I'll likely share that list in another study soon, but for now...

Verse 6 says:

Proverbs 8:6

Listen, for I will speak of excellent things,
And from the opening of my lips will come right things;

And we're always listening to something, right - but what are we listening to? Are we tuned into wisdom? Or to films, music, podcasts, radio or TV shows that are devoid of understanding? Are we humble enough to listen and learn from the right sources?

Proverbs 8:7

For my mouth will speak truth;
Wickedness is an abomination to my lips.

That's the way wisdom talks. Can we say the same of how we talk? We read...

Proverbs 8:8

All the words of my mouth are with righteousness;
Nothing crooked or perverse is in them.

Shouldn't we aim for this!? The answer is yes. We read in Ephesians chapter 4...

Ephesians 4:29

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

And also in Colossians chapter 3...

Colossians 3:8

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

That is, dirty jokes, swearing, and any foul language are out. And of course, James chapter 3 as a whole deals with the danger of the tongue, and in verse 10 we read...

James 3:10

Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

So let our words be good words. Righteous words. Let us speak truth. And not lying, wicked or perverse words. But also consider the safety in words of wisdom, especially in the safety of God's Word, for it is perfect. We may take issue with it, but really, it takes issue with us. And when we finally accept that God knows more than we do, and that His ways really are best, then we become open to hearing His Word...

Proverbs 8:9

They are all plain to him who understands,
And right to those who find knowledge.

That is, wisdom becomes easier to understand the less foolish you are. So, Solomon says, get your priorities right...

Proverbs 8:10-11

Receive my instruction, and not silver,
And knowledge rather than choice gold;
For wisdom is better than rubies,
And all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her.

If anyone was able to make this statement, it was Solomon - for he had both riches and wisdom. We read in 1 Kings 10:21 that he had so much gold and silver, that silver became worthless. And in v29-30 of the same chapter we read that his wisdom was greater than all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. And what does he conclude was the most valuable? Wisdom. Everything else, as he wrote in Ecclesiastes, is vanity.

Jesus Himself taught us not to focus on physical things. We read in Matthew chapter 6:

Matthew 6:31-33

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

So pursue wisdom. For wisdom keeps some pretty good company...

Proverbs 8:12

I, wisdom, dwell with prudence,
And find out knowledge and discretion.

That's a gathering you want to be at! You leave that party knowing what to do, how to do it, when to do it and the likely consequences of it. The key?

Proverbs 8:13

The fear of the LORD is to hate evil;
Pride and arrogance and the evil way
And the perverse mouth I hate.

Do we hate the things God hates? Enough to rid our own lives of evil, pride and arrogance? Enough to clean up our tongues? The central letter in pride is I... are we the centre of our own worlds, expecting others to put us at the centre of theirs? Do we think we know it all?

When we get close to people, we often take on their mannerisms, sometimes even their likes and dislikes. Are we so close to wisdom, that we take on these characteristics?

Proverbs 8:14-16

Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom;
I am understanding, I have strength.
By me kings reign,
And rulers decree justice.
By me princes rule, and nobles,
All the judges of the earth.

Wisdom is the best tool in your toolkit - at work, home and play.

Proverbs 8:17

I love those who love me,
And those who seek me diligently will find me.

The word *diligently* here can also be translated "*early*" - that is, the idea that we not only seek wisdom, that is the Lord, early in the day, but early in the situation.

Proverbs 8:18-19

Riches and honour are with me,
Enduring riches and righteousness.
My fruit is better than gold, yes, than fine gold,
And my revenue than choice silver.

Why are these riches better? Because they are not physical riches. They are not how many qualifications you have? They are not how full your bank account is. But rather the riches of wisdom applied is a life lived well.

Proverbs 8:20-21

I traverse the way of righteousness,
In the midst of the paths of justice,
That I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth,
That I may fill their treasuries.

We all want to be rich men, it's far better to be truly rich. Rich in ways money simply can't buy. There is reward in being wise!

Now, from verse 22-31 we see how foundational wisdom is. Not only to a life lived well. But to life itself. We read...

Proverbs 8:22-31

The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way,
Before His works of old.
I have been established from everlasting,
From the beginning, before there was ever an earth.
When there were no depths I was brought forth,
When there were no fountains abounding with water.
Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills, I was brought forth;
While as yet He had not made the earth or the fields,
Or the primal dust of the world.
When He prepared the heavens, I was there,
When He drew a circle on the face of the deep,
When He established the clouds above,
When He strengthened the fountains of the deep,
When He assigned to the sea its limit,
So that the waters would not transgress His command,
When He marked out the foundations of the earth,
Then I was beside Him as a master craftsman;
And I was daily His delight,
Rejoicing always before Him,
Rejoicing in His inhabited world,
And my delight was with the sons of men.

So wisdom existed before the world was created. In fact it was created through wisdom. And that should not be a surprise to us, for when we look at the wonders of creation we see such enormous complexity - whether from the laws of physics that keep the world turning, to it's precise placement in space so that it's not too hot or too cold for life, to the miracle of birth. Even the simple cell is not simple at all! And the smartest adults still don't fully understand the smallest thing of all - the atom.

Yet all these things work together in such harmony, that even a child can conclude that what we see around us is not the result of random chance, but incredibly intelligent design.

And if wisdom be foundational to life itself, shouldn't we listen to it? Yes, we should. And we read...

Proverbs 8:32-33

"Now therefore, **listen** to me, my children,
For blessed are those who **keep** my ways.
Hear instruction and be wise,
And **do not** disdain it.

Note the items that require action here. We need to listen, but we also need to hear. There is a difference. And we need to keep to wisdom for our own sakes:

Proverbs 8:34

Blessed is the man who listens to me,
Watching daily at my gates,
Waiting at the posts of my doors.

This is like being ready to start class before the gates and doors to your school, college, uni, or course are open. There is an eagerness there.

And so I want to pause for a moment to ask if you ever read ahead before a Sunday morning or evening service. Typically, we teach the Bible verse by verse - so you know where we left off, and where we're going. More recently we're also putting the verses up on our social media pages ahead of each Sunday. But do you read ahead? Are you eager to study the wisdom of God's Word?

Proverbs 8:35-36

For whoever finds me finds life,
And obtains favour from the LORD;
But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul;
All those who hate me love death."

What a contrast that is. And if this be so, why chase anything else? What else promises favour from the God who made EVERYTHING?! Conversely, ignore or avoid wisdom, and you'll look more than stupid in the end. For it is you, and no-one else, that is responsible for your reception or rejection of wisdom.

Chapter nine

As we enter chapter 9, I want to make note of J Vernon McGee's thoughts on the progression of these chapters. He says: *"We have come now to the place where wisdom has opened school. The young man is matriculated into the school of wisdom, and we are thankful for that. Everything is prepared, and we are able to look into this school. The school bell is about to ring."*

We read:

Proverbs 9:1

Wisdom has built her house,
She has hewn out her seven pillars;

7 giving the idea of completeness

Proverbs 9:2-3

She has slaughtered her meat,
She has mixed her wine,
She has also furnished her table.
She has sent out her maidens,
She cries out from the highest places of the city,

That is, she is fully prepared to teach you. And is shouting from the rooftops...

Proverbs 9:4-6

"Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!"
As for him who lacks understanding, she says to him,
"Come, eat of my bread
And drink of the wine I have mixed.
Forsake foolishness and live,
And go in the way of understanding.

So this is an invitation to come and learn at the feet of wisdom. Enrolment for the course in wisdom is open. This might be the first time you've been old enough to be eligible (which isn't very old). It might be this is more of an adult education class. But whichever way, this is the education you need. And hopefully that you want.

And you've probably already spotted many parallels between how wisdom is described, and how Jesus is - such as being present at creation, and being from everlasting - and here there is also the parallel of communion with wisdom, or with Jesus, through the eating of bread and drinking of wine. Being partakers of both.

But, as we'll now see - it's not merely turning up to class that is important. But the attitude of your heart...

Proverbs 9:7-9

"He who corrects a scoffer gets shame for himself,
And he who rebukes a wicked man only harms himself.
Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you;
Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you.
Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser;
Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.

That is, you can deliver the same instruction, correction, or rebuke to two different people and they will respond differently. Again, not because of their intellect, but because of their heart.

We never like to think we're wrong, that we made a mistake, or that we don't know how to do something. But to believe those things are not possible is actually to be full of pride and arrogance - exactly what chapter 8:13 says is the opposite of wisdom. Sure, sometimes the instruction, correction, or rebuke could be delivered in a kinder way - but often, if we're honest - it has nothing to do with what is said, but how we take it. For as someone once said: the trouble with us is that we would rather be destroyed by compliments than saved by criticism.

So how well do you accept correction? There are two Biblical examples I'd like to remind us of:

Nathan the prophet rebuked David for his adultery with Bathsheba, and murder of Uriah. David's response was the right one - "I have sinned against the LORD." David didn't get defensive, didn't say "Nathan, why are you personally attacking me - other people have sinned too". Didn't say "It's not like your life is perfect, Nathan" or "You don't know what it's like to be king - the pressure or the skills involved". David was humble enough to know he was wrong, and able to admit it both before God and before man.

The opposite is true of Herod, who imprisoned John the Baptist because he had called him out for sleeping with his sister-in-law, and killed him in order to please her daughter.

Naturally, I hope you and I will not find ourselves being rebuked for either adultery or murder - yet even in the smallest of matters, with the smallest of rebukes, corrections to our attitude and actions, or instruction in life, love or ministry - we need to be humble enough to respond like David, and not like Herod. To respond in humility, and not pride.

This isn't the last time that Proverbs will deal with this subject, so we'll move on for now. And we read in verse 10...

Proverbs 9:10-12

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
For by me your days will be multiplied,
And years of life will be added to you.
If you are wise, you are wise for yourself,
And if you scoff, you will bear it alone."

This really repeats what we read in chapter 1:7, that fear of the Lord is central to this. Not cowering in a corner, but knowing what God expects from us and living accordingly. With reverence to who He is. And Solomon points out that you will have to live with the consequences of your actions. Up to including on the eternal scale.

Therefore, we need to be very careful which voices we listen to in this world. For wisdom indeed is calling - but so is foolishness. We read...

Proverbs 9:13

A foolish woman is clamorous;
She is simple, and knows nothing.

That is, a woman who is noisy and boisterous, silly and easily seduced, and knows no shame.

Proverbs 9:14-15

For she sits at the door of her house,
On a seat by the highest places of the city,
To call to those who pass by,
Who go straight on their way:

Note how foolishness also shouts from the rooftops, so that all may hear.

Proverbs 9:16-18

"Whoever is simple, let him turn in here";
And as for him who lacks understanding, she says to him,
"Stolen water is sweet,
And bread eaten in secret is pleasant."
But he does not know that the dead are there,
That her guests are in the depths of hell.

And just as last week in chapter 7, the immoral woman tries to entice with the pleasures of sin for a season. And we need to be so careful. Because sin can be pleasurable in the moment - but, as we read in Romans 6:23 *the wages of sin is death*. And as Proverbs will later go on to say...

Proverbs 16:25

There is a way that seems right to a man,
But its end is the way of death.

But note in verse 16 - it is again to the one who lacks understanding that she speaks. Why are they lacking? Well, we can't keep blaming youth and inexperience - at some point we need to grow up. We can't blame our failures on churches that we've gone to, doing the steeplechase from church to church in the hope that our problems will be solved. Nor can we blame our mistakes on the moral failings of others. We need to listen to wisdom. Not foolishness. We need to pay attention to God's Word, and not this world. And we need to take his Word to heart.

Summary

In closing this evening, I want to look at a few verses from our reading again. We read...

Psalms 119:97-99

Oh, how I love Your law!
It is my meditation all the day.
You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies;
For they are ever with me.
I have more understanding than all my teachers,
For Your testimonies are my meditation.

Let's be aiming for that this week!

Application questions

Finally, as we go into this week ahead, let us consider how we can apply this passage to our lives:

- Who are you listening to? (wisdom, or foolishness)
- What are you doing to learn wisdom?

- How do you respond to correction? Do love those that give it, or hate them?

Let's pray.