

SERMON GUIDE

Get Wisdom

Proverbs 1:20-33



Check out the TJC Weekend Recap podcast for a more in-depth look at our sermons each week!

The podcast is available on all streaming platforms!

SERMON NOTES

We are back to our series "Get Wisdom." We are studying Proverbs to become wise people. Week 1 was about the definition of wisdom and the value of it. Week 2 was about the heart posture necessary to receive wisdom (which is fear of the Lord). Today is about the real-time battle for attention. You are constantly being disciplined, either by wisdom or folly. The question isn't whether someone is disciplining you—it's *who*. The voice of wisdom and the voice of folly are both calling. Which one has your attention?

Imagine driving down a road trip and you accidentally have two GPS apps running at the same time. One is telling you to exit left in 2 miles. The other says, 'Continue straight.' You can't follow both—and they're taking you in very different directions. Now imagine both voices are calm, confident, persuasive. But only one leads to your destination. The other leads you off course into chaos or a dead end.

That's what Proverbs is showing us: Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly both have something to say. They both sound convincing. But only one leads to life. The other to destruction. This passage is about voices. And the one you follow determines where you end up.

Exegesis

This passage is the first of many in which wisdom is personified in Proverbs (the most far reaching is in Proverbs 8). The address of Wisdom is to the gullible, but it is ultimately aimed at the son. The father escalates the threat of vs 19 of certain death for all sinners (now referred to as fools) to the awful truth that death is eternal. There is no third way between wisdom and folly. There are no second chances between life and death.

V20 – Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice;

Wisdom is personified as a woman: Lady Wisdom. She cries aloud in the street. In the markets she raises her voice. She is announcing the way of wisdom. She will announce and proclaim the way of wisdom on the streets in this passage, then she will reflect on her address and the response. Notice that wisdom does not wait for an audience but goes with a mission to teach, even to the streets. She is not a gentle persuader, she shouts, pleads, scolds, reasons, threatens, warns, and even laughs.

V21 – at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks

At the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks. She meets people where they are. She cries out for an audience wherever people may be found. She confronts the gullible and compels them to make a decision to accept her and protect themselves against fools and temptations. The setting of where wisdom cries out also highlights where wisdom plays out: in the streets and markets. In the places of everyday life. Notice wisdom isn't personified as crying out from the Temple. It's not that wisdom can't be found there or isn't needed, but the point of the proverbs is to live wisely in every arena and sphere of life.

V22 – “How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?”

Her appeal begins with telling the gullible to stop rejecting her. Her question of "how long?" demonstrates that the people she's addressing are beyond the point of being "gullible youth." There's urgency in her voice. These youths should have already sought wisdom, but instead of embracing her teaching, "love being simple" or gullible. She then addresses the "scoffers" and "fools" as well. How long will they persist in their mockery and waywardness? They find it delightful. They crave it.

V23 – If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you.

Wisdom cries out to the gullible and calls them to repentance. Her reproof ought to lead them to turn from their ways. If they would turn, she would pour out her spirit (her thoughts) and words. She will give them knowledge and insight, if they will turn.

V24-25 – ²⁴ Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, ²⁵ because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof,

Refusal to listen brings consequences. Wisdom has called and been ignored. She stretched her hand out with an offer to take, but no one heeded it. The rejection of wisdom is seen in ignoring her counsel. Hearing her instruction and choosing to ignore and neglect it. Hearing her call, but not following through it with it.

V26-27 – ²⁶ I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, ²⁷ when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.

Because they ignore, she laughs at their calamity. Notice, calamity will come. There's no rejection of wisdom that doesn't result in ultimate calamity and turmoil in your life. She mocks when terror strikes. What does that mean? "Oh, I see it's not going well for you. I wonder why?" "Did you ever think that maybe if you would have done what I said, it could have gone differently for you?" That is the mockery that wisdom levels at the foolish. The terror coming to the foolish who ignore wisdom is as certain as the rising sun. It comes like a storm. It comes like a whirlwind. Distress follows and anguish comes upon them. The idea here is the result of ignoring and neglecting wisdom is the distress and anguish that comes from acting like a fool.

V28-29 – ²⁸ Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me. ²⁹ Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord,

Then they come. That's when the foolish attempt to make promises. Hugging the toilet sick from drinking too much saying, "I'll never do this again" only to be there again a few short days later. They call upon Lady Wisdom in the depths of their calamity and she says, "I will not answer." They seek her in those moments, but won't find her. Why? Because they hated knowledge and chose not to fear the

LORD. There's a crucial lesson in this: wisdom's saving voice is not at human disposal. In other words, you can forfeit wisdom when you keep rejecting it.

There was a kid I grew up with, we played ball together, spent the night together, and was probably my best friend. In high-school he started drinking and doing drugs. In high-school, it didn't seem like the end of the world. "He was trying to be cool." But he eventually got kicked off every sports team. He eventually became an addict, went to jail, and still lives at home now and has nothing. I was on a run through my neighborhood recently and he drove by me on a scooter with a Dollar General bag heading back to his house. I thought to myself later, "Why doesn't he just turn it around?" He was a smart guy. Get a steady job. Find a girl and get married. Make a life for yourself. But there can come a time where wisdom's call has been ignored for so long, you forfeit your chance for it. She will not answer.

V30-31 – ³⁰ would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, ³¹ therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices.

Because if they hated knowledge and did not choose fear of the LORD, and because they would not have Lady Wisdom's counsel and despised her reproof, they get to eat the fruits of their ways. They can have their fill of their own devices. We often say in our culture, "You made your bed, now you have to lie in it."

V32-33 – ³² For the simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them; ³³ but whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster."

Lady Wisdom concludes by bringing it back to the simple. She says they are killed by their turning away. It is their persistent foolishness that destroys them. The simple are killed/destroyed because of their turning away. The fool's complacency destroys them. There is an ongoing dichotomy in the Proverbs, and in the whole Bible, of the way of life vs the way of death. There is a way that leads to prospering and a way that leads to destruction (not just in this life, but eternally). The contrast is that whoever listens to Lady Wisdom's voice will dwell securely. They have peace. They are surrounded by a fortress. They will be at ease and without the dread of disaster. If you live wisely, you don't have to fear your actions bringing destruction upon you and throwing your life in turmoil.

Now, we see in this passage, wisdom crying out for an audience. In fact, the purpose of the proverb of Lady Wisdom giving such bold assertions is she wants the simple to choose now to follow her voice. She describes two futures: despair and peace. Destruction and life. She wants you to see that this is the end destination and choose now the way of wisdom. Listen to her voice.

I don't have time to exegete the passage in the same detail, but I want to look at Proverbs 9. This personifies wisdom and folly. Notice both wisdom and folly both call out. Both voices are evangelistic, seeking to persuade their listeners. They both make promises. And they both call out to the simple (the uninformed and open to persuasion). And while this can be true of all people, it is especially true of young people.

The challenge for us is to recognize the difference between their voices. They can sound familiar at first. Why? Because folly mimics wisdom (Proverbs 9:13-17). Folly tells us, "Stolen water is sweet" which sounds good. It sounds enticing. Notice, the voice of folly and the voice of Satan in Genesis 3 are very similar. They lead us astray from God's prosperous design.

Let's contrast the way Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly cry out:

I. Lady Wisdom

In the Home:

- A parent kneeling beside a child's bed, praying and reading Scripture even after a long day.
- A spouse choosing to forgive rather than hold a grudge after a sharp word.
- A single adult resisting sexual temptation because they trust God's design for intimacy.

In the School:

- A student choosing to sit with the outcast instead of clinging to popularity.
- A teen resisting the pressure to lie or cheat on an assignment when everyone else is doing it.
- A young person seeking godly mentors and asking hard questions.

In the Workplace:

- An employee choosing integrity over shortcuts or shady deals.

- A boss who uses their authority to build up, not dominate.
- A Christian chooses to speak grace and truth in a divisive environment, even if it's costly.

Online:

- Choosing not to engage in a comment war and instead praying before responding—or not responding at all.
- Turning off a streaming show that's degrading your soul because wisdom says guard your heart.
- Curating your feed to fill your mind with truth, not comparison or outrage.

In the Soul:

- That conviction you feel when tempted to sin—and you choose to walk away.
- That quiet inner voice that says: "Slow down. Don't react yet. Seek counsel. Pray first."
- That sermon, verse, or wise friend's counsel that reorients your thinking.

II. Lady Folly

Proverbs 9:13–18 shows Lady Folly as loud, seductive, and deceptive. She mimics wisdom—but her path ends in death.

In the Home:

- Parents too distracted or tired to disciple their kids, settling for "as long as they're happy."
- "You work hard—you deserve to be served, not to serve."
- Avoiding conflict and accountability in marriage under the banner of "keeping the peace."

In the School:

- "Just fit in. Don't be weird about your faith."
- "Everyone's watching that—don't be so uptight."
- "Do what feels right in the moment. You're only young once."

In the Workplace:

- "Look out for yourself—no one else will."
- "It's not technically lying... it's just smart business."
- "Work is everything. You can't afford to slow down."

Online:

- “You need to stay up-to-date—doomscrolling is necessary.”
- “You’re the main character. Your feelings are the compass.”
- “Unfollow anyone who challenges your thinking.”

In the Soul:

- “You’ve already messed up. Why try now?”
- “God forgives everything—so why worry about obedience?”
- “You’ve got time to get serious about God... later.”

Lady Wisdom whispers to your conscience, speaks through your parents, your pastor, your friend, your Bible, even your regrets—and she calls you to life. Lady Folly flatters your ego, feeds your desires, and numbs your fear of consequences—until you wake up in disaster. Lady Folly speaks through the voice of the Enemy, through your flesh and sinful impulses, and through other fools. Folly masquerades as wisdom in our culture today:

- "Live your truth" - turns personal experience into absolute truth. The problem is what if "your truth" leads you to brokenness? What if your truth contradicts God's truth?
- "You deserve to be happy" - assumes your desires are always trustworthy. But Jeremiah 17:9 reminds us the heart is deceitful. The wise examine their heart; they don't follow it blindly.
- "Do what feels right" - idolizes autonomy and self-expression. But wisdom tells us to be true to our Creator. He knows what is best for us.

The lesson of Proverbs 1 today is that wisdom and folly end in opposite destinations. The book of Proverbs is relentlessly outcome-oriented. Wisdom = life, protection, prospering, peace, honor, etc. Folly = destruction, regret, death. Being on the path of wisdom has a destination. And being on the path of folly has a destination. Fools live only for the present moment and never think about the consequences. The wise always ask, "Where does this lead?"

Close

Lady Wisdom cries out in the streets, but she isn't just a poetic figure. She is a shadow of someone greater. Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God. He also stood in the streets. He also called out to the simple and the sinner: 'Come to me, all who are weary.' And He too was rejected by scoffers and fools who loved darkness more than light. But listen to this good news today: Jesus doesn't just save and transform the wise. He went to the cross and bore the consequences for fools. He took the punishment for our folly. And in Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit, we can become wise.

The most foolish thing you could do is keep living at arms distance from the Lord. To deny your need for Him and to try to fix yourself is foolish. Christ offers Himself to fools and simpletons. We can have Him if we come. Some of you are in Christ, but you've found yourself at times listening to Lady Folly. You have fallen into traps of sin and foolish decisions and behaviors. The good news for you today is this: you don't have to continue in the way of fools. You belong to Christ. You have His Spirit. He's given you His Word. Turn to Him and seek His voice, the true voice of wisdom.



LOOK BACK

- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you grow in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you go to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?
- What is a sin you have been struggling with that you need to repent of?



LOOK UP

- **REVIEW**

- Read Proverbs 1:20-33 and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different translation.
- Additional Scripture
 - Proverbs 9:1-18
 - 1 Corinthians 1:24
 - Matthew 11:28-30
 - Jeremiah 17:9

- **DISCUSS**

- According to Proverbs 1:20–21, where does Lady Wisdom cry out, and what does that teach us about wisdom?
- What is the tone of Lady Wisdom's question in Proverbs 1:22, and what does it reveal about her audience?
- What does Proverbs 1:23 promise to those who respond to wisdom's reproof?
- What are the consequences of rejecting wisdom according to Proverbs 1:24–27?
- Why does Proverbs 1:28–29 say that wisdom will not answer when the foolish finally seek her?
- How does Proverbs 1:30–31 describe the principle of sowing and reaping?
- What does Proverbs 1:32–33 say about the outcomes of folly versus wisdom?
- How does Proverbs 9 help us contrast Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly?
- What are some modern phrases or cultural values that reflect the voice of Lady Folly?
- What is a practical step you can take as a result of this sermon?



LOOK AHEAD

- **BUILD UP | SEND OUT**

- **How are you making yourself known at church this week?**
- **How are you growing to know Christ better this week?**
- **How are you making Christ known this week?**

- **PRAYER**

- **Pray over any request from your group members.**
- **Pray for our team:** Shawn Casto (Mobilization Pastor)
- **Pray for our replanters:** Christ's Fellowship
- **Pray for our short-term teams:**
 - Philippines Team departing on June 21, 2025
 - Kenya Team departing on June 29, 2025
 - Europe Student Team departing on July 6, 2025
 - Indonesia Team departing on August 11, 2025
 - Rome Team departing on November 7, 2025
- **Pray for our long-term units on the mission field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks
- **Pray for the unreached.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>