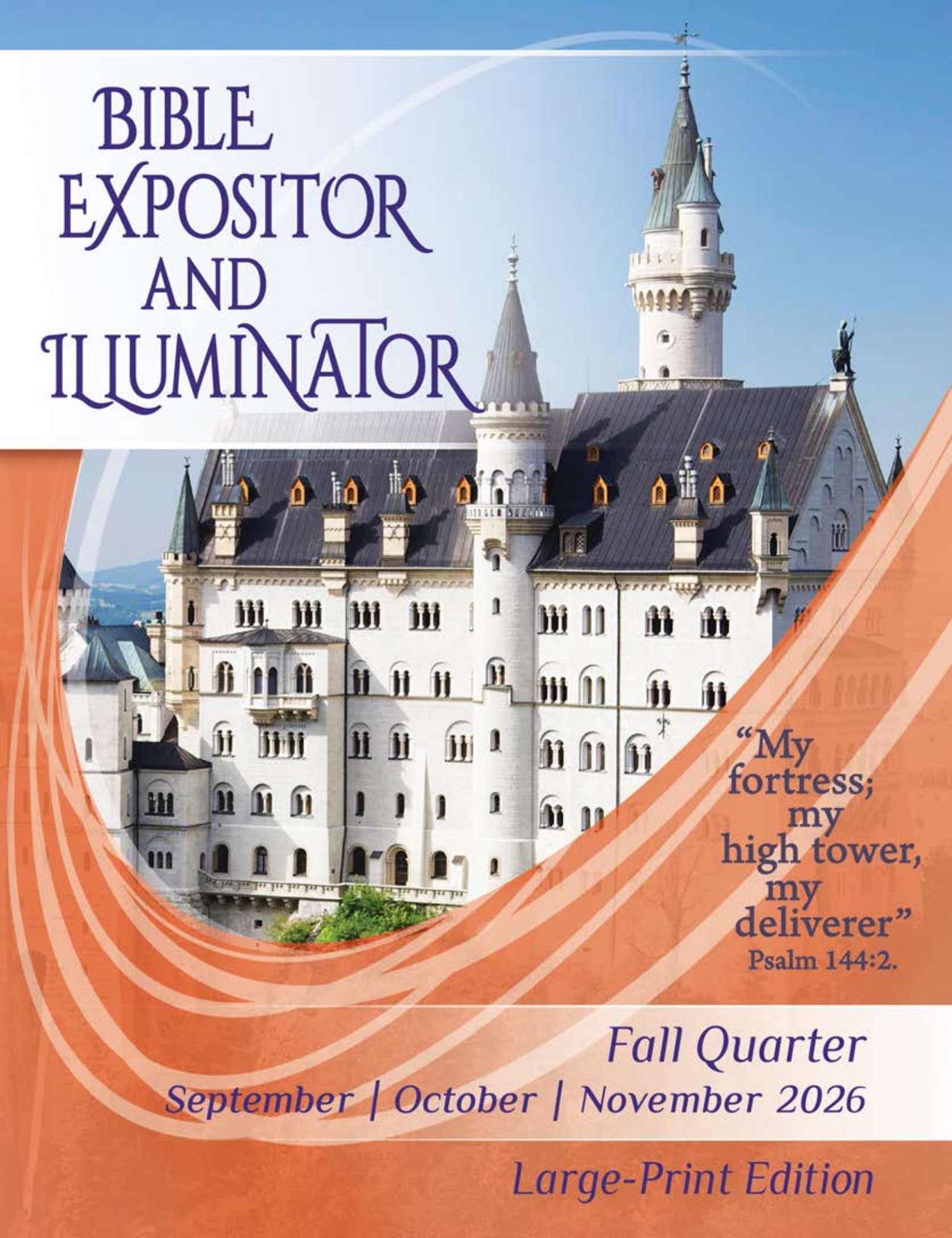


BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR



*“My
fortress;
my
high tower,
my
deliverer”
Psalm 144:2.*

*Fall Quarter
September | October | November 2026*

Large-Print Edition

Bible Expositor and Illuminator

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FALL QUARTER

September, October, November 2026

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God’s Wisdom Versus Man’s Wisdom

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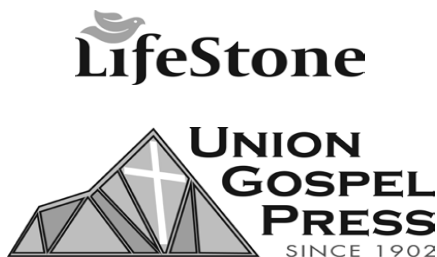
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LOOKING AHEAD

You can fool all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool God. This quarter, we will increase our understanding as we examine God’s wisdom versus human wisdom. In our first unit, “The Way of the Fool,” we begin with Proverbs 1:20-33 in lesson 1, where we see wisdom personified as a woman crying out loudly to the simple fools surrounding her. She offered her wisdom to those who will listen. Lesson 2 focuses on the fools who ignored wisdom’s message and trusted in their riches to save them (Ps. 49:1-20). In their pride, as we learn in lesson 3, they would not listen to wisdom’s voice or learn the fear of the Lord, which is where wisdom starts (Prov. 30:1-14). Lesson 4 reinforces that God’s way is wise and always the right path (Prov. 14:1-19).

In the second unit, we uncover the way of the wise as we look at verses from Ecclesiastes (9:11-18) and Proverbs (22:1-16) in lessons 5 and 6. We read that wisdom surpasses strength, money, and riches.

The next lesson, from Proverbs 15:1-15, instructs us to use self-control and give a gentle answer to turn away anger. In lesson 8, James challenges believers in Christ to demonstrate wisdom by walking in humility and meekness (Jas. 3:13-18). Others notice wisdom in the life of a person submitted to Christ. In lesson 9, Paul reminds us that the wisdom of the gospel may seem foolish to the unbeliever, but God’s “foolishness” is wiser than people’s wisdom, and God’s “weakness” is stronger than human strength (1 Cor. 1:18-31).

In our final unit, “Wisdom’s Reward,” lesson 10 encourages us to pursue God because He gives wisdom, knowledge, and understanding to the righteous (Prov. 2:1-9). In lesson 11, James instructs us to joyfully endure trials and view them as opportunities to grow in our faith. If we do not know what to do during such circumstances, we are not to worry. Instead, we are to ask our generous God for the wisdom that can come only from Him (Jas. 1:1-11).

Our next lesson, from Proverbs 3:13-35, provides insight into the happiness and blessing gained when we find wisdom. Wisdom often brings blessing to those who adhere to God’s commands.

Our final lesson wraps up the unit on “Wisdom’s Reward” with a study of 2 Peter 1:1-11. Peter provides encouragement by reminding us that God’s divine power has given us everything we need for this life and for godly behavior. We need not fret about specifics. Everything we need for life on earth and in heaven is ours in Christ.

—Lynda Kopacz

PLEASE NOTE: Fundamental, sound doctrine is the objective of LifeStone Ministries, Union Gospel Press. The writers are prayerfully selected for their Bible knowledge and willingness to submit to the Spirit of Truth, all writing in his own style as enlightened by the Holy Spirit. At best we know in part only. “They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

The Path of Wisdom

GLENN WEAVER

Wisdom, as personified in Proverbs 1:20-33, offers to direct our lives through the maze of decisions we face every day. Sadly, many people do not find this profound treasure.

Discovering wisdom is sometimes characterized as a long quest up a very high mountain to find a guru, usually an old man, sitting on the mountain peak. Once found, the guru provides a pithy saying that describes the meaning of life and the source of peace and happiness.

But wisdom is not hard to find. Personified as a lady of noble character, Lady Wisdom wants to be found. We do not have to trek to a remote location to locate her. Her voice is not quiet; it is not a mere whisper amidst a cacophony of human voices. Wisdom cries out to us during our daily activities. Her teachings may be found as we interact with bystanders in the street, converse with coworkers, and buy groceries from strangers.

Her teachings are foundational to proper living. For example, how could we properly govern our nation without following wisdom's instructions? Our court system would be in shambles, and injustice would engulf our society. Solomon compiled this book of wisdom so that his son would rule the kingdom wisely.

Wisdom has a unique character. On the one hand, she is compassionate and kind. She offers her good counsel to all people who want the gracious gift that she gives. She not only freely lends her insights but also makes every effort to persuade people to follow her path.

Her path is pleasant. Her teachings promote peace and prosperity. Those

families that follow wisdom find security and prosperity. She promotes prudence when making decisions to avoid traps and bad judgments, and she shows the benefit of learning from correction.

But on the other hand, she is merciless in her rebuke of those who spurn her teaching. She boldly laughs at the ruin that befalls those who reject her. When those who scoff at wisdom face inevitable destruction and then insincerely seek her, she eludes their search (Prov. 1:26-28).

Wisdom is not a god based on the personification of an ideal, like Pax, the goddess of peace, or Victoria, the Roman goddess of victory. Wisdom, although presented using personification as a woman, is a teaching curriculum that provides the proper way to live. If wisdom's rule is followed, success and prosperity generally follow. If its teaching is refused, then a harsh lesson lies in store. Accordingly, this treasure trove of wisdom offers no mercy or second chances. Requesting love and compassion from wisdom would be akin to asking a mathematical table to make two plus two equal seventeen.

Many ancient Near Eastern nations had collections of wisdom literature. Some of them, most notably some of the Egyptian writings, had similarities to the Old Testament wisdom literature. In the biblical writings, however, there were some clear distinctions that elevated its wisdom teaching far above the writings of other nations.

Israel's wisdom literature is written with the recognition that wisdom comes from God.

(Editorials continued on page 186)

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

PROV. 1:20 Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets:

21 She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying,

22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

24 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:

26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;

27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.

28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:

29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:

30 They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.

31 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.

32 For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

33 But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

NOTES

Wisdom Calls the Foolish

Lesson Text: Proverbs 1:20-33

Related Scriptures: Proverbs 5:7-14; 8:1-36; 9:1-12;
Isaiah 3:9-15; Jeremiah 6:16-21

TIME: between 971 and 931 B.C.

PLACE: Jerusalem

GOLDEN TEXT—“Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets” (Proverbs 1:20).

Introduction

This quarter contrasts God’s wisdom with man’s “wisdom.” We begin with a dramatic call to wisdom that establishes the consequences if we fail to listen and follow: disaster, desolation, and destruction.

The book of Proverbs has two main sections. The first, chapters 1 through 9, contains our text. While there are memorable one-liners in these chapters, the section mostly contains longer explorations of the need for wisdom and barriers to gaining it. Chapters 1 through 9 woo readers into a posture of heart and character that puts them in the position to benefit from the proverbial sayings in chapters 10 through 31, the second section. The second section includes the kind of pithy wisdom sayings that earned the book its fame.

This first section not only warns of the dangers of folly but also extols the benefits of wisdom. As we begin a new quarter, may we hear and obey God’s wisdom.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **THE SIMPLETON’S INVITATION**—Prov. 1:20-22
2. **THE SIMPLETON’S OFFER**—Prov. 1:23
3. **THE SIMPLETON’S WARNING**—Prov. 1:24-27
4. **THE SIMPLETON’S REGRET**—Prov. 1:28-31
5. **THE SIMPLETON’S DESTINY**—Prov. 1:32-33

Exposition: Verse by Verse

Throughout Proverbs 1 through 9, readers meet four main characters or types of people. {The first is the book’s implied speaker: an experienced wise person. This character is the one saying “my son” to the reader. Another experienced wise person is the famous woman of Proverbs 31. She is presented as the

pinnacle of hard-earned wisdom to conclude the book. The experienced wise person has been through a lot, learned from God’s Word and discipline, and shares wisdom with those who will listen.

Next, Proverbs features an inexperienced person growing in wisdom. The inexperienced need humility and correc-

tion, but they have begun to heed the invitation to wisdom throughout the book.

Now for the less savory pair. The main character of the present text is the simpleton. This person is described in Proverbs 14:15 as inexperienced. Simpletons are not yet on the path to wisdom, but Proverbs 19:25 holds out hope that they can be convinced to turn toward wisdom. Often, they are young. For this character, simplicity does not mean complete ignorance but gullibility that is manifested in foolish decisions.

Finally, there is the fool.^{Q1} Fools in Proverbs have turned their backs on the fear of the Lord consistently, recalcitrant in their rejection of God (cf. 1:7). {Nowadays, the word “fool” connotes ignorance. In Proverbs, the word often connotes a deep, settled disposition of opposition to God (cf. 14:9).}^{Q2} No wonder Jesus warned against calling one’s brother a fool! Listen to Lady Wisdom try to convince a group of simpletons not to become fools.

THE SIMPLETON’S INVITATION

PROV. 1:20 Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets:

21 She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying,

22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

The text introduces a figurative scenario. A gaggle of simpletons was milling around town. They moved through the street, on to the town center, and then walked by the city gates. All the noises of a crowded ancient downtown were present. Suddenly, jarringly, a woman’s voice shattered the city’s white noise. Her voice was filled with a passionate seriousness that garnered everyone’s attention. City gates may sound to modern ears like an entrance

only, but in Old Testament villages, they also functioned like a city hall, where elders conducted business and arbitrated legal matters.

The woman was not so much talking to everyone as she was calling to the unsuspecting simpletons. She did not mind that everyone was staring because the simpletons’ destiny rode on whether they heard and took her wisdom to heart. Who was this brazen woman interrupting peaceful commerce? She was Lady Wisdom.

{Proverbs uses the literary device of personification to display different life paths. Lady Wisdom invited readers to learn from her experience in chapters 1 and 8. Another persona enters in chapters 5 and 7. In modern speech, we might call her Lady Seduction. In contrast to Lady Wisdom, Lady Seduction invited people to follow their desires into a life of short-lived pleasure.^{Q3}

Lady Seduction’s job was much easier. She spoke in low breathy tones to captivate her audience. Lady Wisdom fought against the current of human sinful inclination, so in Proverbs 1:20-33, she ignored marketplace protocol and made a racket. Solomon used four terms in verses 20-21 for how she raised her voice: a ringing cry, a loud noise, a cry, and a speech. She might be ignored by the unrepentant masses, but she would be heard.

{Lady Wisdom was a master teacher, so she began in verse 22 with a series of rhetorical questions.^{Q4} Like a good teacher, she cared about her listeners, so her questions began the same way that suffering psalmists started their laments, asking, “How long?” She was not mocking the simpletons, but she wanted them to see where their path of indifference led.

First, Lady Wisdom asked about their affections. Why did the simpletons love gullibility? Were they tired of being so easily molded in the world’s hands? After questioning their affections, she asked about their penchant for arrogant speech. They loved running their

mouths. She also wanted to know about their distaste for learning. The wisdom and knowledge that could awaken them from plummeting toward folly was the very thing they despised. They were like curably ill people who hate medicine.

THE SIMPLETON'S OFFER

23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

Lady Wisdom labeled her entire speech with a word that connotes rebuke, correction, and warning. While the simpletons goofed around, she sounded an alarm. She repeated the word again in verses 25 and 30. When the word “reproof” occurs in the book of Proverbs, it often focuses on the discomfort of being rebuked. At best, Proverbs 29:1 says people bristle at reproof. At worst, Proverbs 5:12 shows that people hate being rebuked.

Before unleashing a flurry of warnings, Lady Wisdom wanted simpletons to know the payoff if they were willing to be corrected. Why should they heed her warning? Wisdom bestowed durable, transformative wisdom on her pupils. She would even unleash her spirit—that underlying and animating energy that made her prudent—on the willing simpleton (1:23). What did the simpleton need to do to receive these riches? She used one of the Old Testament’s favorite words for responding to God. Prophets used the word “reproof” hundreds of times. {Lady Wisdom was urging the same thing: turn from sin and folly and turn to God.}^{q5}

THE SIMPLETON'S WARNING

24 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:

26 I also will laugh at your calamity;

I will mock when your fear cometh;

27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.

It was not too late for the simpletons to turn, but they had stiff-armed Lady Wisdom in the past. When she called, they shut her down. She extended a helping hand, but the simpletons ignored it. She offered advice, but they overlooked it. The simpletons were tolerant of a great many things but not of Lady Wisdom’s rebukes.

{Her words and outstretched hand would not be unlimited, though. A storm was coming into the simpletons’ lives. Final judgment is certain for all who reject God’s Word, and the book of Proverbs is especially attuned to earthly consequences for foolishness.}^{q6}

Lady Wisdom’s judgment vocabulary is stirring. One of her judgment words in verse 26, “calamity,” also describes falling on hard times in Proverbs 27:10. Another of her judgment words used in 1:27, “distress,” is from the same Hebrew root word translated in 11:8 as “trouble.” Like the early signs of a tornado, the simpletons created conditions that later would cause horror. Lady Wisdom knew that today’s fun and mischief would unexpectedly turn to tomorrow’s terror.

Lady Wisdom was more interested in truth and life change than politeness, so she warned that when the storm came, she would laugh. Laughter and judgment seem a strange pairing, but God’s laughter in the Old Testament is associated with judgment. For example, in Psalm 2:4, God laughs at nations who think they can derail His Son’s kingdom. {Lady Wisdom’s laughter is borne not of hatred but rather of the unshakable conviction that willfully rejecting the Lord’s wisdom is a ridiculous decision.}^{q7}

THE SIMPLETON'S REGRET

28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:

29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:

30 They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.

31 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.

The simpletons were a mysterious bunch. At some point, they crossed the point of no return and became recalcitrant fools. The fact that Lady Wisdom was appealing to them means they were not yet beyond hope. But Lady Wisdom knew the danger of repeated, unrepentant sin. At a certain point, it was too late. Psalm 95 attests to this reality when the psalmist says to listen to God's call to repentance today. A day will come for simpletons when there is no time to turn around their lives, their relationships, or their reputations. While God's forgiveness can be received by faith up until one's last breath, like the thief on the cross, that does not mean the disrepair and damage of a lifetime of foolish living can be undone (cf. 2 Chr. 33:13-17).

Lady Wisdom painted a grim picture of reversed roles. She called, and the simpletons ignored her. They would call to her one day, and she would rebuff them. Wisdom said that to convince them to turn to her, but it was a real possibility that they could wander into self-made, irreversible disaster. They would look for Lady Wisdom but would not find her. The simpletons could not blame Lady Wisdom when judgment came. She would not unfairly give them a failing grade.

And now the core issue was revealed: the simpletons did not choose to fear the Lord. Proverbs 1:30 indicates that it is a choice to fear the Lord. Fearing the Lord is not an automatic state for humans, who inherit sin from Adam. Proverbs 1:7

famously says that fearing God is foundational for a life of wisdom. Psalm 130:4 declares that fearing God flows from receiving God's gracious forgiveness. To fear God is to trust and respond to Him as King. The concept bundles repentance, trust, reverence, worship, and service all into one powerful shorthand phrase for life under God. Those who fear God are in awe of Him and receive His forgiveness.

{Simpletons today are not in danger of a one-time bad decision not to fear God. Instead, they are sewing together a life tapestry that consistently rejects God as their King. Fools are not people who made a single bad choice but those who have gone down a path that rejects God and refuses to fear Him.}⁹⁸

Lady Wisdom moved from a storm metaphor to a feast metaphor in Proverbs 1:31. Rejecting her invitation set the table for the simpletons' eventual banquet. The good news was that it was an all-you-can-eat buffet. The bad news was that the menu was all the mockery, pride, selfishness, and carelessness that they had sown throughout life.

Lady Wisdom used a phrase referring to "the fruit of their way." As fruit grows from one's gardening or farming efforts, so lifestyle produces character. The fruit on the menu at the simpletons' banquet grew from their "way." This word can refer to a literal or figurative life path.

Proverbs 2:8 says the way of those who fear God is protected. Proverbs 4:19 says the way of the wicked is vulnerable and dark. Proverbs uses the word "way" about seventy-five times to present readers with two options: God's way or their own way. The former is the fruit of grace and the latter the fruit of sin.

THE SIMPLETON'S DESTINY

32 For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

33 But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

{Lady Wisdom invited the simpletons to turn to the fear of the Lord in verse 23.}⁹ She entertained the opposite outcome in verse 32 by using a similar word that means “turning away.” If the simpletons, malleable as they were now, decided to turn away from the fear of the Lord, then they would die. Proverbs 14:15 characterizes simpletons as listlessly drifting through life.

Eventually, indecision becomes a decision, and simpletons find themselves turning their backs on the fear of the Lord. That posture leads to death. The second half of Proverbs 1:32 describes this turning away with a word that connotes ease. The easy life that seems right and does not consider one’s way leads to destruction.

The simpletons followed their hearts right into the arms of death and perishing.

At her monologue’s grimmest point, Lady Wisdom surprised the simpletons by ending with a note of hope. The heart of one of the simpletons might be pricked by her words. She simplified the way to life with the word “hearkeneth,” or “hear.”

Whoever would merely listen would have life. It sounds so simple, but this little word dwells at the heart of responding to God. Turning, trusting, obeying—all of this is wrapped in one word, “hear.” Deuteronomy 6:4-6 famously uses the term to call Israel to respond to the Lord with all-encompassing covenant love. To truly hear God’s Word is to respond to it (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Matt. 11:15).

No wonder Lady Wisdom promised so much to the one who heard her out. Rather than death, the listener would receive life. She described this life in two ways that capture the deep longing of the human heart.

She first described the listener’s life as firm, solid, confident, and secure. “Security” here does not refer to a life

free of suffering but to the steadiness that comes from trusting God’s provision and eternal care.

Wisdom then described the listener’s life as at ease and free from fear of disaster. Once again, this does not refer to a pain-free life but a life that does not fear the judgment of God or the fallout of bad decisions.

{The unperturbed stability of the listener is the exact opposite of the fearful dread of disaster described in Proverbs 1:26-27. Ironically, the simpletons had sought ease all along with their lackadaisical approach to life and God, but instead they forfeited the peace available through submission to God.}¹⁰

—Matthew Swale

QUESTIONS

1. Who are the four main characters in Proverbs 1 through 9?
2. How does the way Proverbs uses the word “fool” differ from the way people use it today?
3. How are wisdom and folly personified and contrasted?
4. How did Lady Wisdom begin her speech in Proverbs 1:22?
5. How did Lady Wisdom want her hearers to respond?
6. What is certain for those who reject God’s wisdom?
7. Why did Lady Wisdom laugh at those who refuse to listen?
8. What transforms someone from a simpleton into a fool? Does this happen suddenly or over time?
9. What did Lady Wisdom call simpletons to do?
10. What is ironic about the eventual fate of the simpletons who refused to listen to Wisdom?

—Matthew Swale

Preparing to Teach the Lesson

This Sunday's lesson begins with the difference between God's wisdom and human wisdom. The world may identify a wise person as one who has insight in addition to knowledge. We Christians, however, know that the truly wise person is one who follows God's teachings and is committed to obeying Him. A wise person seeks to increase his learning and understanding (Prov. 1:5) and fears the Lord, as stated in Proverbs 1:7: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

Our first four lessons explore the way of the fool. In this lesson we examine a passage in which Solomon described wisdom as a woman with an urgent message to foolish people, who ignored or even scorned the benefits of knowledge. Part plea, part admonishment, and part warning, the message sternly informs the foolish that they will one day regret scoffing at wisdom.

TODAY'S AIM

Facts: to understand the way of foolishness and the consequences it brings.

Principle: to realize that God makes His wisdom available to all who will listen.

Application: to listen to the voice of wisdom so that we avoid the consequences of foolishness.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Many voices call for our attention. These voices come from people or groups that want us to hear their message. The voices can be soft or shrill. Their messages might be neutral or even helpful. At other times their messages are destructive. What voices vie for our attention? (Allow for response. Students may suggest charities, politicians, or special interest groups.)

Our Bible passage today is Proverbs 1:20-33, wherein we find another voice trying to get our attention—the voice of wisdom. Let us make sure this voice drowns out all other voices.

DEVELOPING THE LESSON

1. The urgency of wisdom's call (Prov. 1:20-23). Proverbs 1:20 begins with the words "Wisdom crieth without." Here Solomon used the literary device of personification, attributing human characteristics to inanimate objects or ideas. Solomon pictured inanimate wisdom as a woman ("she uttereth her voice") (cf. 3:15-18; 4:6-9).

Believers recognize that the personified wisdom of Proverbs 1 points us to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the true source of wisdom and who is "made unto us wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:30).

Solomon further stated that wisdom speaks, as seen in such words and phrases as "crieth," "make known my words to you," and "pour out my spirit unto you." This draws attention to the urgent and obvious message wisdom conveys to people. Wisdom's message should be apparent to anyone who is paying attention.

Solomon identified several places where wisdom speaks—outside, in the streets, in the chief place of concourse (a crowded place of business), at the city gates, and in the city itself (Prov. 1:20-21). These places were prominent and public, showing again the urgency of wisdom getting her message to people.

Wisdom further "crieth" to three kinds of people—simpletons, who "love simplicity;" scorners, who "delight in their scorning;" and fools, who "hate knowledge" (vs. 22). She calls to them all.

She does not whisper; she urgently cries out loudly everywhere she can and even stretches out her hand (vs. 24). Wisdom's goal is to "turn [people] at

[her] reproof” (vs. 23). She calls people to turn from their foolish ways—from their simplicity, their scorn, and their hatred of knowledge (vs. 22)—and follow the way of wisdom.

The word “reproof” is key in this passage, appearing in verses 23, 25, and 30. One of the purposes of wisdom is to reprove or rebuke people when they are foolish.

This function reminds us of 2 Timothy 3:16, wherein we read that the inspired Word is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

Knowing and following the Word will make us wise for salvation (vs. 15) and for doing good works (vs. 17) and will rebuke us when we stray into the way of the fool.

2. The consequences of ignoring wisdom’s call (Prov. 1:24-32). Despite wisdom’s urgent appeal, foolish people still refuse to listen (vss. 24-25).

They hate knowledge, do not fear the Lord, ignore wisdom’s counsel, and despise reproof (vss. 29-30). All these actions bring severe consequences—ridicule, calamity, fear, desolation, destruction, distress, anguish, and silence when they do seek help (vss. 26-28).

Further, ignoring wisdom’s appeals will cause the foolish ones to suffer the consequences of their own actions (Prov 1:31; cf. Gal. 6:7-8). They will suffer death and destruction (Prov. 1:32).

Such people need to heed the urgent call of wisdom so that they can avoid these dire consequences.

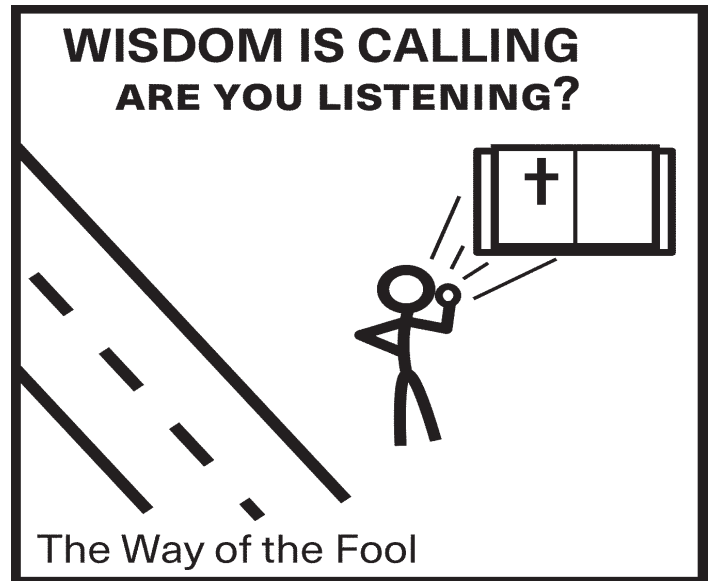
3. The blessings of following wisdom’s call (Prov. 1:33). Solomon concluded his instruction by pointing out the blessings that come from heeding wisdom’s call. The wise will “dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.”

Wise people are not free from difficulties. In fact, Scripture often speaks to instances when godly people will face trials of many kinds. But they have the

promise of protection and peace as they look to Jesus Christ, the true source of wisdom. They can ask Him for wisdom when facing life’s challenges (Jas. 1:5).

ILLUSTRATING THE LESSON

Pay attention to wisdom’s call to avoid the fool’s way. Blessings follow those who listen to the Lord’s wisdom, but destruction follows the fool.



CONCLUDING THE LESSON

Wisdom’s call is not hidden from us. Our responsibility is to listen to the call (Prov. 1:24).

Where do we find wisdom’s call today? We find it in the Scriptures. As we read, aided by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, we can know true wisdom. Scripture does not deal directly with every situation we face, but we do find scriptural principles to give us wisdom for any situation. Have you been neglecting the Scriptures? If so, you are in danger of succumbing to the way of the fool. Spend time in the Word every day, and ask the Lord to give you wisdom.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Next week, we will look at Psalm 49 to find God’s wisdom regarding wealth and riches.

—Don Anderson

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Wisdom can be found almost anywhere by those who are willing to listen (Prov. 1:20-21).
2. We should be concerned about those who make unwise decisions (vss. 22-23).
3. We should not ignore wise advice from others (vss. 24-25).
4. Destruction often comes unexpectedly, like a whirlwind (vss. 26-27).
5. If one ignores the way of wisdom, one may have no help in times of trouble (vss. 28-30).
6. Foolish living often comes to a fitting conclusion (vs. 31).
7. Living for ease and prosperity leads to downfall, unlike the way of wisdom (vss. 32-33).

—James Frohlich

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Why is the fear of the Lord so important in pursuing wisdom?
2. How does it feel to have someone reject your hard-earned wisdom?
3. Where have you observed the wise walking securely and simpletons worrying about the fallout of their destructive way of life?
4. Has anyone ever given you advice or correction that helped you grow in wisdom?
5. Have you ever witnessed someone reject advice or correction and later seek help from friends or family and not receive it (cf. Prov. 1:28-30)?
6. Have you ever realized a lack of wisdom in your life? What did you do about it?

—Matthew Swale

ILLUSTRATED HIGH POINTS

She uttereth her voice in the streets (Prov. 1:20)

Crowds often gather at a street corner before a sporting event. They may be walking to the stadium, purchasing sports gear, or listening to a musician. Amid the hustle and bustle of the crowd, wisdom can be found. Wisdom calls out to the entertainment-seeking crowd not to live for pleasure. We should seek the Lord for wisdom and call out to Him.

But I will not answer (vs. 28)

There was a man who seemed to have it all. He had a nice house, a well-paying job, and a beautiful family. But his friends and family noticed unwise spending habits. When they tried to talk to him about it, he claimed he had lots of money. Through foolish decisions, his finances dwindled away until he had nothing left.

Faced with mounting debts, he turned to his friends and family for aid. But they would not help. If we ignore the advice of others, we may suffer the consequences of our decisions and find no one to help.

The prosperity of fools shall destroy them (vs. 32)

Many of us have heard of young sports stars acting unwisely. After receiving a massive contract, a young athlete has more money than he has ever seen. Not thinking about the future, he buys a nice house, purchases an expensive car, and eats at fancy restaurants. He can keep up the lifestyle while he is receiving a paycheck, but the day comes when he either retires or becomes injured.

Now he is stuck. Although he can no longer afford the pleasures he once had, he is unwilling to change his spending habits. Eventually, his lifestyle catches up to him, and he files for bankruptcy.

Money cannot overcome foolishness.

—James Frohlich

Golden Text Illuminated

“Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets” (Proverbs 1:20).

The image of wisdom crying out in the streets is a powerful one. It speaks of urgency, of a message too important to be confined to quiet corners or whispered in secret. But why does wisdom cry out? And what does it mean for us to hear her voice?

To understand wisdom’s call, we must first recognize that true wisdom comes from God. The book of Proverbs tells us, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (9:10). Wisdom respects and honors God and is reflected by a life that acknowledges His authority over all areas of life. This wisdom is not merely intellectual knowledge but a transformative force in our lives.

Consider the metaphor of a refiner’s fire used in Malachi 3:2-3. In these verses, we read, “But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire.” Just as a metalworker uses intense heat to purify precious metals, removing impurities and strengthening the material, so does God’s wisdom work in our lives. When wisdom cries out in the streets, it is an invitation to this refining process.

In Solomon’s time, people often conducted business publicly at the city gates, where there would be many witnesses (cf. Ruth 4:1-13). The public nature of wisdom’s call reminds us that God’s invitation to growth and transformation is open to all, not just to the elite or the specially educated. Wisdom cries out where people of all backgrounds gather, offering her insights to anyone willing to listen and respond.

But responding to wisdom’s call requires repentance. When wisdom cries out, it urges its listeners to reconsider

their ways, to turn from foolishness and sin, and to embrace God’s perspective.

We see this illustrated in the life of David. When confronted by the prophet Nathan about his sin with Bathsheba, David responded with genuine repentance. His heartfelt cry, recorded in Psalm 51:10, reflects the transformative power of godly wisdom: “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”

Submitting to wisdom’s refining process is not always comfortable. The heat of conviction can be intense, and the process of change can be challenging. But God promises His presence through it all. As Isaiah 43:2 assures us, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned.”

The goal of wisdom’s refining work is our increasing conformity to Christ’s image. As we heed wisdom’s call and submit to her teachings, she gradually transforms us. Paul described this process in 2 Corinthians 3:18: “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

So, when we hear wisdom crying out in the streets of our lives, through Scripture and through godly counsel, how should we respond? Let us respond with open hearts and willing spirits, ready to be refined and purified, allowing God to conform us into the image of His Son.

—Gene Kissinger

Heart of the Lesson

This quarter's lessons present exciting theological concepts that apply to daily life. Our starting point is the Old Testament wisdom literature, while the precepts later unfold fully in the New Testament.

Solomon collected real-life observations, often in simple sentence couplets called proverbs. They should shape our worldview and beliefs about God, existence, morality, and choices in life.

Theology shapes our values and drives our choices. The apostle Paul admonished young Timothy to heed his lifestyle and doctrine because of their importance (cf. 1 Tim. 4:16).

One key theme in Proverbs is the folly of man-centered worldviews contrasted with the superiority of God-centered wisdom. In today's lesson, notice how the fool responds to God's way of wisdom.

1. The fool rejects God's calling (Prov. 1:20-22). Today technology puts the world at our fingertips. Advertisements and entertainment shape how we think and live. Godly wisdom often seems lost in the world's noise, confusion, and chaos.

God's wisdom is like the interruption of the town crier. The voice of reason, truth, and counsel is personified here and shown crying out in the streets, bringing clarity and news in morally confusing times (vss. 20-21). Wisdom is not hidden in a back alley or secluded in an ivory tower. It calls out in the open where anyone interested can hear it. God calls people through His Word to salvation!

Wisdom calls, but the fool does not answer (cf. 8:1). Solomon described the fool's character as simple, ignorant of God's Word, and scorning God's gracious call and reproof (Prov. 1:22; cf. Ps. 1:1).

2. The fool refuses God's counsel (Prov. 1:23-25). God graciously appeals to man in creation, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit's work in the conscience. However, the fool stubbornly refuses to listen (vs. 23). Rejecting the authority of God's Word, he disregards God's call and outstretched arms (vs. 24). He disdains His counsel (vs. 25). Deceived by pride, he lives to please himself.

Rejecting moral truth invites confusion in discerning right from wrong. Indifference to spiritual matters leads to spiritual destitution and moral bankruptcy.

3. The fool faces devastating consequences (Prov. 1:26-33). The fool relinquishes God's help to his demise. The consequences are a sobering reminder that God's moral law operates in a universe of moral absolutes.

Wisdom issues a chilling warning. She promises laughter and mockery in the darkest hour of calamity and distress (vss. 26-27). The warning becomes even more poignant. She will withdraw from fools, even though they will seek help (vs. 28).

Fools despise knowledge and counsel and lack the fear of God. They are unmotivated to love, serve, listen to, or obey Him (1:29-30; cf. 9:6,10). The fool is left to his own devices, suffering the consequences of his moral choices (1:28-31), eating the bitter fruit of sin.

How we view God, ourselves, and the world around us matters. Our beliefs shape values and attitudes, drive motives, and direct decisions. God promises safety and security to those who observe His timeless wisdom (vs. 33). Do not be a fool. Instead, wise up!

—Gregory H. Sergent

World Missions

We often tend to see education and action as two different areas—as if we had to choose between applying our minds and spirits in search of *wisdom* and engaging in *action* in ministry. But many missionary scholar practitioners have robustly embraced both. Proverbs 1:20 says, “Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets.” Scholar practitioners take the wisdom they have acquired through prayer, study, and research and apply it to evangelism, proclamation, and discipleship.

One of many examples of seeking wisdom and engaging in action is the great Scottish missionary scholar William Temple Gairdner. Gairdner was born in 1873 and became involved with campus ministry during his studies at Trinity College, Oxford. It was through this connection that he came to a truly living faith. Gairdner realized that having a deepened faith was not enough. Influenced by the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, he responded to God’s call to go to Cairo in 1899. Cairo was, and remains, one of the most important centers of the Muslim world. Reflecting on his involvement in campus ministry in Oxford, he decided to focus on ministry among especially the educated Arab Muslims in Cairo’s universities and society in general. He went to serve God as part of the Church Missionary Society.

Gairdner made rapid progress in learning the difficult Arabic language and within a year was proficient enough to engage in evangelism and discipleship. Slowly and definitely, but with some setbacks, Gairdner began to see young, educated Muslims turning to faith in Jesus. To reach those who were already seeking to apply

their minds to wisdom, Gairdner built upon the knowledge they had. He consistently sought to be a scholar of the Scriptures but also to look for possible bridges to the gospel in the philosophy and understanding of those to whom he was reaching out. As we are reminded in Proverbs 9:9, “Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.” Gairdner sought an approach that combined apologetics (rather than critical polemics) with a deep spiritual life and hospitality. Alongside colleagues and his beloved wife, Margaret, he opened his home for students to engage in Bible study and conduct meetings for those who were curious to learn more about Jesus. They also published a magazine that addressed some issues of apologetics.

Gairdner was also gifted artistically and wrote songs, poetry, and plays with the aim that they all would play a role in moving the gospel witness forward in Cairo society and beyond. As a scholar of Scripture, he wrote and published commentaries in Arabic on the books of Galatians, Hebrews, and Philippians, seeking to deepen the understanding of Cairo’s young and growing churches.

He worked for nearly three decades in Cairo before he passed away, leaving behind a growing body of believers and inquirers from the city’s educated classes. The power of Gairdner’s life and witness is exemplified in this comment from a Muslim student: “I felt he loved me for myself, not because I might become a Christian only—and in this I found he was like Christ” (Padwick, *Temple Gairdner of Cairo*, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge).

—Matthew Friedman

The Jewish Aspect

For centuries, more than one major ancient Near Eastern culture had been producing wisdom literature (writings aimed at helping people develop the discernment and character necessary to live effectively in a complex world).

Not long before King Solomon's reign, an Egyptian sage wrote these words in the work *The Instruction of Amenemope*: "Give your ears and hear what is said, Give your mind over to their interpretation." Sounds a lot like the book of Proverbs!

God led Solomon to write a type of literature similar to what other cultures produced in part so that His perfect truth could enter an international dialogue about what it means to live well. Unlike Sumerian and Egyptian wisdom literature, which tends to focus more on practical living advice based on human wisdom, the book of Proverbs roots effective living in the fear of the one true God.

Because Solomon's wisdom came from God, it possessed an authority and quality not contained in *The Instruction of Amenemope* or similar ancient works. No wonder 1 Kings 4:29-34 says that Solomon's wisdom exceeded the contemporary sages and gained him an international reputation. In 1 Kings 10:1-10, the queen of Sheba realized that Solomon's wisdom was evidence of the love and justice of the God Solomon worshipped. She traveled great lengths to bear witness to such wisdom in action.

Like any renowned figure, King Solomon wanted to pass on his wisdom to the son who would succeed him as Israel's king. The repeated refrain "my son" in the book of Proverbs is a literary strategy that characterizes the whole book as keen parental wisdom being passed on to the reader.

The phrase "my son" also reflected Solomon's desire to see his son Rehoboam reign well after his death. He had high hopes for his son. Sadly, 1 Kings 12 describes Rehoboam's disastrous rejection of his father's wisdom and how it led to Israel splitting into two separate kingdoms: the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Proverbs often shows the dangers of rejecting such wisdom.

That does not mean the book of Proverbs failed. The book was not written solely for Rehoboam but for all who would turn from sin to trust and fear the Lord. Even though Solomon's son rejected Solomon's wisdom, Solomon's descendant Hezekiah would choose differently. Proverbs 25:1 says that King Hezekiah commissioned the copying and compilation of Solomon's proverbs. Perhaps Hezekiah is responsible for the book of Proverbs in its present form.

As King Hezekiah made the tough leadership decisions necessary to return Judah to covenant faithfulness with God, Solomon's proverbs must have helped him grow in wisdom as a leader. Such is the beauty of God's written Word: one never knows how and when Scripture's wisdom will bear fruit. But we can be confident that it always will bear fruit.

King Solomon's son Rehoboam typified the simpleton by following his foolish peers. Because of sin, everyone runs the risk of going the way of the simpleton-turned-fool, headed for destruction. But, as He showed mercy to King Manasseh, who squandered his reign in folly and evil and later turned to God, God graciously sets simpletons on the path of wisdom when they repent and believe.

—Matthew Swale

Guiding the Superintendent

I remember as a kid playing outside and hearing my mom call me home when it got dark. It was frustrating because I wanted to keep playing with my friends. What would have happened had I not listened?

Now that I am older, I understand why my mother called me home. It was not a call to keep me from joy but to safety and security so that I could have joy!

DEVOTIONAL OUTLINE

1. Wisdom's call (Prov. 1:20-27). In Proverbs 1:20, there is a similar call: "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets." Wisdom is personified here as a woman walking the streets of Jerusalem calling all the foolish to listen. It also applies to today.

In verse 22, she asked, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?" She was calling three categories of people. First, she called the simple. They are uninformed, merely ignorant of wisdom. That might be understood, at least in part, as those who seek to find purpose in the simple pleasures of life while missing the blessings of following the Lord. They hear the call of wisdom but do not respond.

The second group she called were the scorers—those who mock the Lord, His wisdom, and His ways. They hear wisdom calling but laugh at her. They think they know better. They prefer worldly wisdom. They will not find true wisdom, as pointed out in Proverbs 14:6: "A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth."

Finally, she called out to fools to change their ways. Proverbs 1:7 states, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of

knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." Psalm 14:1 paints a picture of that in practice: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." Fools deny everything about the Lord and rebel against Him.

Imagine a woman walking through the most corrupt and depraved section of a city, sharing the gospel and calling people to repentance. What do you think would happen? Some people would roll their eyes; some would laugh and taunt. Others might desire (or even try) to harm or kill the woman. That is the picture in this passage as a woman called out to the three groups.

Woe to those who do not heed her call. She will laugh at their calamity as they deny her counsel (Prov. 1:25-26). They will be afraid and face pain and destruction fiercely (vs. 27).

2. Wisdom's rejection (Prov. 1:28-33). Worst of all, those who reject wisdom's call will be left to flounder in their own "wisdom." Persistent rejection of God's wisdom will be their downfall. They will call out to God, but it will be too late.

All people have to give an account for their sins (2 Cor. 5:10). Ignorance of God's Word is no excuse for pursuing a life of sin. God provided a way of salvation for all those who seek Him with all their heart. Christ provided sufficient payment for all sins.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Teach children to seek God with all their being. Help them avoid falling into one of the categories listed in Proverbs 1:22. Those who heed wisdom's call will not face the consequences of foolishness and sin.

—David Chambers