

Introduction: “My Son” (v8-9)

*Hear, my son, your father's instruction,
and forsake not your mother's teaching,
for they are a graceful garland for your head
and pendants for your neck.*

Proverbs 1-9 can be easily outlined if you just look for the words, “my son.”

These words begin each subsection of Proverbs 1-9
except for the two times that wisdom speaks—
which makes sense since Wisdom would not say “my son”!—
1:20-33 and 8:1-36

Wisdom’s two addresses come at the beginning and the end of Proverbs 1-9,
providing brackets for the father’s instruction to his son.

Proverbs 1-9 is directed at the youth—or the simple (some say the “gullible”),
young men (perhaps teenagers) who are preparing to take on adult responsibilities.

Two voices are calling.

There is the voice of wisdom—the teaching of his father—
and there is the voice of folly—wicked men who offer easy money,
and the adulteress who offers casual sex.

The time has come when the son must take a stand for himself:

will he embrace the wisdom of his father?

Or will he turn aside to easy money and easy sex?

The father’s way leads to life and blessing,
but the way of folly leads to death.

The father’s opening remarks in Proverbs 1:8-9 calls the son to

“Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching.”

This is one of the only references to the mother—

but she is put here on an equal footing with the father.

But her teaching is assumed to be the same as his—

the father is presented as the one who is teaching his son the way of life.

The son is to “forsake not” his mother’s “torah”—her law.

This “teaching” or “instruction” is the moral catechesis of Israel.

Why do I use the word “catechesis”?

We use the Shorter Catechism in our Sunday school program.

We use it to instruct our children in the basics of Christian faith and life.

Proverbs is a catechetical manual in Christian living.

It is an exposition of “the two ways”—the way of life and the way of death.

If you would teach your children wisdom,
catechize them with Proverbs!

And children, why should you listen to your parents?

Why should you pay careful attention to their “law”?
“for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.”

The instruction of your father and the torah of your mother,
are glorious adornments!

In other words, you’ll look really good, if these teachings adorn your life.

In Egyptian culture, the rulers and judges wore garlands around their neck,
as symbols of their great wisdom and service to their god.

Since Solomon had an Egyptian wife,
you can see the implication:

in Solomon’s kingdom, every child who heeds the instruction of his parents
wears the tokens of wisdom upon their head.

But immediately following this introduction,
we are introduced to another voice—
the voice of “sinners.”

1. The Father’s First Lesson: Do Not Walk in the Way of Sinners (v10-19)

¹⁰ *My son, if sinners entice you,
do not consent.*

The father’s first warning is against the “gang”--
against peer pressure—

beware of those who would lead you astray—those who would entice you
with promises of easy money.

The temptation of the gang is significant.

After all, the father’s voice is the voice of authority and tradition.

The gang promises equality and “good times”--

“We will all have one purse”—the son is being offered an equal share,
something he will never be offered by his father.

The words “my son” signal the opening of a new section.

“My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.”

There is a difference between temptation and sin.
If you encounter temptation, that is not in itself sin.
But what do you *do* with the temptation?
“Do not consent.”

Sinners love company.
If they can get you to join them in their debauchery,
that will only make them feel better!

The father then warns his son against a particular temptation:
The Call of the Wild

a. The Enticement of Evil (v11-14)
i. It Speaks in Secret (v11)

¹¹ *If they say, “Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood;
let us ambush the innocent without reason;*

Verses 11-12 set forth what they want to do;
verses 13-14 give their arguments for why he should join them.

They lie in wait for blood—they seek to ambush the innocent.
Why?
For selfish gain.
They want to fill their houses with plunder.

You know this gang.
You may work with them.
You may live next door to them.
They devote themselves to gaining “stuff”--
and they don’t care how they do it.

“Come” they say.
The tempter comes to the son,
seeking to lure him from the way of his father.
The father had warned the son—but would the son listen to the voice of his father?

Sound familiar?
This is Genesis 3 all over again.
Adam was the son of God.
He was called to walk in the way of his Father,
but he chose to walk in the path of folly—the path of the serpent.
This is Exodus 32 all over again.
Israel was the son of God.
He was called to walk in the way of his Father,

but he chose to walk in the path of folly—in the sin of the golden calf.

Every Israelite son was reminded that he stood in the path of his fathers.

When will we find a faithful son?

When will we see the wise son who refuses to walk in the way with fools?

ii. Exercising Power and Control (v12)

¹² *like Sheol let us swallow them alive,
and whole, like those who go down to the pit;*

You can see in verse 12 a sense of self-aggrandizement.

Like Sheol – let us swallow them alive...

We are the powerful ones!

We hold the power of the grave.

iii. Getting What We Want (v13)

¹³ *we shall find all precious goods,
we shall fill our houses with plunder;*

Likewise in verse 13 we get what we want –

We shall find all precious goods, we shall fill our houses with plunder.

Prosperity will be ours!

So

iv. Being Part of the Inner Circle (v14)

¹⁴ *throw in your lot among us;
we will all have one purse”—*

You can be part of the inner circle.

This is very often the thing that persuades the young to join!

Power and prosperity are nice –

but that sense of belonging –

that sense of being a *part* of something important!

Being included in the inner circle!

That temptation is powerful!

b. The Vanity of Evil – They Set an Ambush for Themselves (v15-19)

¹⁵ *my son, do not walk in the way with them;
hold back your foot from their paths,*

¹⁶ *for their feet run to evil,
and they make haste to shed blood.*

¹⁷ *For in vain is a net spread*

*in the sight of any bird,
18 but these men lie in wait for their own blood;
they set an ambush for their own lives.
19 Such are the ways of everyone who is greedy for unjust gain;
it takes away the life of its possessors.*

The Father warns his Son against the way of the wicked – the way of the wild!
“My son, do not walk in the way with them; hold back your foot from their paths,
for their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood.”
Proverbs 1-9 is all about 2 “ways.”
There are two paths.

And only two paths.

There is the path of wisdom and the path of folly.
Which one will you walk?

Here is the path of fools.
They run along it–hastening down its broad track–
and they will do anything that their fancy suggests.

But “in vain is a net spread in the sight of any bird,
but these men lie in wait for their own blood; they set an ambush for their own lives.”

Not only is the way of sinners wrong,
it is also stupid.

The wise son is like the bird that sees the net coming–
he flies away!
The wise son will see that the wicked are fools–
they will fall into their own trap and ambush themselves.

The conclusion is clear:
“Such are the ways of everyone who is greedy for unjust gain;
it takes away the life of its possessors.”

2. Wisdom’s Cry (v20-33)

As we go through Proverbs 1-9 we will see
that the father speaks with great confidence that his son will listen.
There is a certain presumption that the son will walk in the way of wisdom.

But when wisdom speaks to the simple,
there is a certain foreboding about their fate.

We see that in Wisdom's first address to the simple.

This address has a chiastic form:

Wisdom grows exasperated with the simple/the mocker (22-23)
Because the simple refused to listen (24-25)
Wisdom then will laugh at you when judgment comes (26-27)
Wisdom then will not answer (28)
Because they despised Wisdom (29-31)
And the simple/the fool will be destroyed—but the wise will live (32-33)

We see here the eschatological character of wisdom.

Wisdom is not just about "how to live day by day."

It is that!

But it is so much more!

Wisdom is all about how to live day by day in the light of the END.

If today is all that matters,
then why not join the gang?!

You see this on the streets quite clearly.

Who are the children who are able to stay clear of "the gang"?

Those who have an eschatological vision!

Those who are able to keep a clear focus on the END,
which for them is "some way out of the 'hood."

It may or may not be Christian eschatology,

but they have a hope and a future that they keep clearly in view—
otherwise they'll end up out on the streets.

You live in a context just like that.

You are surrounded by people who live for today.

They may be far more respectable than the drug-dealing gang leader on the streets,
but in the END, they are no different.

At the judgment day, junkies of all sorts will discover that their this-worldly pursuits
have gained them only the scorn of Lady Wisdom.

a. Wisdom Speaks in Public (v20-21)

²⁰ *Wisdom cries aloud in the street,
in the markets she raises her voice;*

²¹ *at the head of the noisy streets she cries out;
at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:*

“Wisdom cries aloud in the streets.”

Like the father/elder who sits in the city gate,

Wisdom also speaks publicly.

She speaks in the markets,

she speaks in the city gate—

in other words, the voice of wisdom is not a private voice.

And she speaks to the simple.

b. Wisdom Starts with *Turning* (v22-23)

²² *“How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?*

How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing

and fools hate knowledge?

²³ *If you turn at my reproof,*^[a]

behold, I will pour out my spirit to you;

I will make my words known to you.

Wisdom doesn’t waste time addressing the mockers.

“A stupid man will get understanding when a wild donkey’s colt is born a man!”

(Job 11:12)

Don’t waste your breath on fools.

We said last time that the “simple” are neither wise nor foolish,

they are in a sort of middle ground.

They are not yet fools—but neither are they wise—

and if they do not make a conscience decision to become wise,

then they WILL become fools.

Wisdom is not something that just “happens” to a child.

Folly dwells in his heart.

God promises in our baptism to be our God,

but that does *not* mean that our response is irrelevant!

The simple are simply fools waiting to happen!

And if you can hear my voice, and you are still simple,

then “how long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?”

How long will you be content to play games with God?

How long will you refuse to become wise?

To jump ahead to our parallel passage at the end of the chiasm:

how long will you hate knowledge,

and “not choose the fear of the LORD”? (v28)

Remember what the fear of the LORD is?

It is to be more concerned with what God thinks of you,
than with what others think of you.

But if you turn at Wisdom's reproof,

then "behold, I will pour out my spirit to you;
I will make my words known to you."

If the simple turns and seeks wisdom,

then "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,
will give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation
in the knowledge of him,

having the eyes of your hearts enlightened,

that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you."

(Eph 1:17-18)

c. Wisdom Mocks the Calamities of the Wicked (v24-27)

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,*

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.*

But, "because I have called and you refused to listen,

have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded,

because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof,

I also will laugh at your calamity;

I will mock when terror strikes you,

when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind,

when distress and anguish come upon you."

If you laugh at wisdom,

then she'll laugh at you!

If you insist on walking in the path of folly,

then Wisdom will mock you when the day of calamity comes.

And "at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed,

and you will say, 'How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof!'" (5:11-12)

d. Wisdom Refuses to Answer Those Who Despise Her (v28-31)

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,*

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.*

In verses 28-33 the address turns from the second person singular (“you”) to the third person plural (“they”).

In other words, Wisdom has been speaking directly to the simple.

Now she turns to the son and warns him against remaining simple.

“Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer;
they will seek me diligently but will not find me.

Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD,
would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof,

therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices.” (28-31)

It may sound cruel for Wisdom to ignore their pleas for help.

Will God actually do this?

Will God despise those who “seek me diligently”?

You must understand what is going on here:

who is doing the seeking?

Fools.

Mockers.

The simple who refused to learn wisdom.

Why are they calling for wisdom?

Because the day of judgment has come.

They do not fear the LORD any more today than they did yesterday.

They are merely concerned for their own hide.

The wise do not wait for judgment day.

The wise do not wait for their sin to catch up with them!

e. But Whoever Listens to Wisdom Will Dwell Secure (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.”*

“The simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them;
but whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease,
without dread of disaster.”

Quite a sermon for a female preacher!
Not very ladylike!

“Truth has a hard edge, and wisdom does not dull it.” (Waltke, 207)
But Wisdom is not interested in scoring points,
she does not care to tickle ears.
She grabs you by the collar of your shirt,
looks you straight in the eye,
and says, *Listen to me or DIE!*

If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.
Enter by the narrow gate.
For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction,
and those who enter by it are many.
For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life,
and those who find it are few.
I am the Way, the Truth and the Life,
no one comes to the Father except through me.

What is Jesus saying in all of these statements?
Nothing else beyond what Wisdom had said before:
there are two ways—
The way of Wisdom
And the way of Folly.
In the *end*, there is no middle ground.
You cannot remain simple forever.
If you do not become wise, you will become a fool.