

Choosing Between Life's Leading Ladies

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[0 : 01] We have reached the end of our series in the book of Proverbs. We began this series way back in mid-April at the beginning of the craziness. And here we are, mid-October, wrapping up this wonderful book.

And we're going to wrap up in the book or the chapter, Proverbs chapter 9, which Caleb just read so well. You know, you could summarize Proverbs chapter 9 with just two words.

And you might want to write this, these two words, somewhere on your bulletin if you're taking notes. They're the words, choose wisdom. That's how you summarize Proverbs chapter 9.

In fact, you could summarize the whole book of Proverbs with those two words, choose wisdom.

And that's what makes this chapter such a helpful chapter to wrap up this series in the book of Proverbs.

In fact, chapter 9, we're going to be presented with a choice between wisdom and folly. And each are depicted as a leading lady.

[1 : 09] Two leading ladies that we're going to need to choose between this morning. And we'll meet those leading ladies in just a minute. But I've got to be up front with you about something. In the middle of Proverbs chapter 9, maybe you remember it when Caleb was reading.

In verses 7 through 9, there is this very practical test. It's a diagnostic. It's like a stress test. It shows you where you're at, what you're doing.

It reveals which of these two leading ladies that you're actually following after now. So here's the test. How do you respond when someone confronts you with some kind of correction, some kind of reproof, some kind of criticism?

How do you respond to that? Do you respond in defensiveness, whether you attack back or you escape? Either way, you don't want to deal with what's being said. Or do you receive it?

You welcome it. You're actually grateful for it. Because all correction will benefit in some way. So here's what I'd like to ask you to do at the outset of the sermon.

[2 : 22] Would you think of a recent time you were confronted? Someone corrected you. Someone criticized you. How did you respond?

Defensive or teachable? That's going to help you understand which lady you're choosing between now. Now, main point of the sermon, choose wisdom.

And I'm going to help you see that by pointing out two points. The first one is this. Life's two leading ladies call daily. That's right up in your notes. Number one, life's two leading ladies call daily.

Now, the Bible lays out two ways to live. You're going to live for God or you're going to live for yourself. Live for sin. Here in chapter 9, we have a choice between two leading ladies, which represent two ways to live.

And in chapter 9, these two leading ladies are contrasted. So, A, we see two names. In 9-1, wisdom has built her house.

[3 : 29] 13, the woman folly is loud. These are their names. Wisdom, look at, I mean, this is going to be a lady with supernatural, superhuman abilities.

She loves truth. And she loves to protect her own. She's noble and she leads those who fear the Lord into God's good ways of truth, justice, compassion.

She's going to lead her own into life. You know what? You could basically say wisdom is the biblical wonder woman. Folly, on the other hand, she's a smooth talker up to no good.

You're going to see in a little bit, she's a know-nothing and she leads to death. Biblically speaking, she's Cruella de Vil. 101 Dalmatians.

Cruella de Vil. Cruella de Vil, she kills puppies. So, we're introduced to these two ladies, leading ladies, and they have names.

[4 : 36] Wisdom, folly. But now I want to help you see there are two ways. B, two ways. In verses 1 through 3, we see wisdom's ways. You see her conduct.

And conduct is always a demonstration of character and action. She's active. She's industrious. She knows what she's doing.

And those who are in her house receive the blessing of her hard work. She's a responsible woman. Look at this. Look at verse 9. She has built her house.

She has slaughtered her beast. She has mixed her wine. She has also set her table. She has sent out her young women to call. She is busy doing things.

She knows what she's doing. She delegates. She's very responsible. She's proven. She's proven. Folly, on the other hand, in verses 13 through 14.

[5 : 42] Look what she's doing. She sits. She's in her seat. She's not doing anything.

She's loud. Verse 13. She's seductive. That Hebrew word is actually the word for simple. That shows up as calling all the simple to follow. It's a word that better means like naive.

Naive. Not only is she naive. This is quite an indictment here. She knows nothing. Verse 13.

The Hebrew literally is not knows nothing. She's a not know nothing. So we have wisdom who is active and industrious.

And folly who's sitting on her duff. A not know nothing. Irresponsible. I'm reminded of Psalm 1. Wisdom is like that one who is like a tree planted by streams of water.

[6 : 48] Bears its fruit. Leap does not wither. Folly. It's like chaff blown by the wind. Their ways reveal their characters.

And those who follow after them become just like them. That's how this works. Choose wisdom.

And then there are the two high places. See. Two high places. This is in 9.3. 9.14. Maybe you notice that those words. High places in town. Look at verse 14.

She sits at the door of her house. She takes a seat on the high places of the town. Both wisdom and folly are seated in high places. Or at least wisdom sends out her young ladies to call out from the high places.

If you're familiar with your Bible at all. Especially in the Old Testament. You're familiar with God's people going to high places to worship gods that are not the one true God. High places is a way of talking about places of worship.

[7 : 50] Now if you remember Jerusalem. Jerusalem is on Mount Zion. And the temple in the city of Jerusalem is on a temple mount.

It's in a high place. So what we have going on here brothers and sisters is that wisdom and folly represent calls to worship.

Who are you going to live for? Wisdom is saying hey you know what? You need to fear the Lord and let that operating system govern all of your applications in life.

Folly is saying eh nah. You need to run the operating system of it's all about me and do whatever you want. Live for that God.

She's calling from that high place. Two different high places. Two different gods. Two different leading ladies. And then D.

[8 : 58] Two calls. Two invitations. And these two invitations contrast all the more. Make it all the more clear who lady wisdom is and who lady folly is.

Look at verse 4. Whoever simple let him turn in here. And now look at verse 16.

Whoever is simple let him turn in here. It's identical wording. Both ladies are saying the same thing. But both ladies they're calling to very different things.

Their audience. The simple. The naive. It's Proverbs 1.4. The Proverbs. The book of Proverbs is to give prudence to the simple.

That you can live in God's good ways. The good life according to God. The audience we see in verse 4 is wisdom sends out her young ladies to call anybody.

[10 : 10] Anybody willing to listen and follow. Come. Come turn in here. Come to me. Wisdom says. And I will share with you my bounty. Look at folly.

This is interesting. Verse 15. She's sitting in the door. And she's calling to those who pass by. Who are going straight on their way. Did you see that? It's almost as if folly is trying to call off the wise from their good and straight path.

Of following their one true God. And saying come on in here. Notice their food. Verse 5. Come.

Eat of my bread. Says wisdom. And drink of the wine I have mixed. My wine. My bread. Her own. Homemade. Nutritious.

Using the best ingredients. Made for you. Because this is what is best for you. And by the way. It's going to include vegetables. Because they're good for you.

[11:17] But they're hers. She's made them. This is from her hand. It's good for you. Now.

Let's look what folly offers. Verse 17. She says. Stolen water is sweet. And bread eaten in secret is pleasant. She offers stolen water.

She offers bread eaten in secret. It's not her own bread. She didn't make that bread. This is forbidden food. She didn't make it. But she's offering it.

Did you notice her spin? Her smooth words? Stolen water is sweet. Maybe for a little bit.

And bread eaten in secret is pleasant. I'm not so sure about that actually. They offer different foods.

[12:18] One's homemade. The other's stolen. And notice where this call leads to. Wisdom's call culminates in verse 6.

Leave your simple ways and live life. Life. Life. If you respond to wisdom's call. If you.

If you respond in humility. And allow her to teach you. If you take her hand. And allow her to lead you. Look what she'll do for you. Verse 11. For by me. Says wisdom. Your days will be multiplied.

And your years will be added to your life. This isn't just. Long life. It is. Full. Long life. The abundant life. Of what Jesus talked about.

It is a life of great blessing from God. Because you're walking in God's ways. And you need to repent to get there.

[13:17] Leave your simple ways. Jesus. 9.18. You would think.

This is folly speaking. But it's not. She doesn't tell you. Where her way leads. She doesn't want you to know.

Where her way leads. She just wants you living in the here and now. In the sweetness of stolen water. And so the narrator. Steps in.

In verse 18. And the narrator. Is sure to tell you. Where her way leads. But. But he does not know. Remember. She is a not know nothing.

In verse 13. The effect. On people who follow her. But he does not know nothing. That the dead are there. That her way leads to Sheol. The place of the dead.

[14:13] No doubt. Spiritual death. So we got two choices. Choose wisdom. Choose life. Choose folly. Choose death.

Wisdom offers life. According to the fear of the Lord. She represents the abundant life. That Jesus came to give all. Who would come after him. Leave their simple ways.

And declare him. And follow him as Lord and King. Folly offers death. Dressed up as life. You know what fake news is.

This is fake life. Life apart from God. Life. Attempted to be lived.

Attempted to be crafted. Without fearing him above all else. Without him being the greatest governing reality of your life. Bluff. You know what Jesus does in Matthew 16.25.

[15:10] He calls her bluff. Jesus says. What does it profit a man. If he gains the whole world. But forfeits his soul.

He's calling folly's bluff. There's no life there. There. That's why the choice is clear.

Choose wisdom. Two leading ladies. And they both. Are calling daily.

Come. Turn in here. Leave your simple ways. Come here. one offers life the other offers death which brings us to point two of the sermon choose the leading lady who gives life choose wisdom or maybe we should start asking this question who have you been choosing whose way are you on right now there is a test A. The revealing test verses 7 through 9 coming back to where we started how do you respond to correction or criticism defensive or teachable we need to think about correction rightly we need to think about reproof biblically it's a kind of teaching it is a kind of instruction it's confrontational yes and it exposes some kind of shortcoming in you or some kind of mistake of thinking or even some kind of sin but those who fear the Lord always have something to learn from any kind of correction or criticism but what it is it's a kind of instruction if you flip back in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 1 hear wisdom 124 because I have called and you refuse to listen have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded because you have ignored all my counsel and would have would have none of my reproof wisdom's reproof

I also will laugh at your calamity look at verse 29 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 the way you see wisdom she uses correction and reproof this is part of the way her way to walk in wisdom so when your friend or your spouse they offer criticism or correction how do you respond to that if your parent is seeking to speak into your life to say something to help you how do you respond a supervisor from work a coach someone from your life group a pastor or elder from the church they're seeking to address something in your life for your good how do you respond in verses 7 and 9 there are two contrasting responses the response of a scoffer and the response of a wise man a scoffer is one who scoffs whatever whatever kind of a hardened heart that resists the way of wisdom and in verse 7 in the beginning of verse 8 we see this scoffer what happens when you attempt to instruct a scoffer look at the ends whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury do not reprove a scoffer or he will hate you a scoffer a wicked man is walking the way of folly and when they do the chief operating system of their heart is it's all about me and that's going to govern how they respond to a reproof oftentimes they perceive it as threat and they react in anger and in hate and they will attack back [20:13] I've done it I'm sure you have done it we see it in ourselves we see it in others in contrast to that the second half of 8 and 9 reprove a wise man and what will you get we get a knuckle sandwich will you be hated you reprove a wise man one who's being governed by the fear of the Lord one who's running an operating system that's centered to that is the glory of Jesus he is our creator our ruler our savior and judge and when that is governing your heart above all else and you get corrected a wise man says oh man thanks for loving me thank you he loves you for it she loves you for it he or she receives reproof correction as teaching as instruction that's why you reprove a wise man a righteous man and they grow still wiser they always have something to gain from it that's why you instruct a righteous man and he will increase in learning there's always something always something to gather from correction always something to benefit from always something to learn always something to grow so here we have two different responses to correction we have the scoffer self-centered defensive running the

OS of it's all about me and you get a knuckle sandwich for trying to correct them but the other side is the wise man the wise woman God-centered teachable welcoming hey it still stings right correction rebuke still stings but if God's glory is governing your heart you will receive it with gladness the scoffer represents a prideful response the wise man represents a humble response so how about you how do you respond when you're corrected when you're criticized think in two levels in general how do you respond generally speaking it doesn't matter who it is how do you respond or maybe it's helpful to think a little bit more specifically a particular person a particular relationship that you have a hard time receiving correction and instruction from either way it's exposing pride it's exposing an operating system that is not fearing the

Lord but rather it's self-protective you need to if this is you and it's me you need to take the words of wisdom to heart from verse six leave your simple folly ways and live it does raise the question what accounts for the difference what accounts for the difference between the response of a scoffer to correction and the response of a wise man to correction why what's the difference well that's B the determining system difference and that's in chapter nine verse ten this month we began a bible memory program as a church because we're convinced that

God's word on our minds and our hearts will steer us clear from sin and keep us on the path of blessing and we've intentionally started with Proverbs 9 10 the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight it is the fear of the Lord that determines how you will respond to correction and criticism remember what that word fear means it's a kind of reverence it is a kind of governing reverence reverence of your life it's consciously calling to mind that your God the greatest reality of your life your Jesus is the creator ruler savior and judge and he determines your response to whether it's criticism or praise every human being we we all have an operating system running in our hearts your heart biblically speaking is the control center of your life whatever whatever controls your heart controls your life and when this operating system is governed by

God his glory his wonder it's going to determine how you apply a response to criticism scoffers running it's all about me the pride operating system respond in defensiveness wise who are running a humble operating system it's all about Jesus they respond to the same criticism with teachability they're saying hey there's benefit in this somehow it's going to result in greater wisdom increase

learning some way somehow I'm going to receive this I'm going to listen to this I'm going to benefit from it so if you are defensive to correction in general or in a specific relationship it's time for you to leave your it's all about me ways the call is to repent of your pride and call out to your loving [26 : 38] Lord Jesus to rule this particular area of your heart it's time for you to own your defensiveness with others to confess your pride to them admit it's difficult and welcome their help so let me ask you a very specific question do you have someone you need to talk to in light of Proverbs chapter 9 you've been resisting them their help their love the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is insight insight into how to respond wisely to correction think about this what would happen if more and more of us of Christ the King Church welcomed and even sought out correction what kind of atmosphere would that generate in our church what kind of culture would result from that

James 4 6 God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble when we're running this operating system of fearing God and we're walking in humility God pours out grace which brings me to the last point the abounding gain the abounding gain verses 11 and 12 recap what has been said by wisdom herself in 9 6 in 9 6 leave your simple ways and live in verses 11 and 12 well they recap what folly leaves out in the narrator says in 9 18 you come follow wisdom and you will find abundance of life you live did you notice in verse 11 the by me for by me your days will be multiplied and years will be added to your life ones days and years multiplied and added filled with the fullness of the goodness of

God the good life according to God correction is a part of that it's part of the good life it's responding in humility to reproof and criticism it's part of the good life verse 12 if you are wise you are wise for yourself it sounds kind of self-serving doesn't it when in actuality it's true it's the best thing for you if you fear the Lord you are wise for yourself it's the best thing that you can do for yourself to leave your simple ways of it's all about me and running in full bore it's all about God that results in abundant life fullness God's goodness walking the path of wisdom the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life but if you choose folly if you scoff you alone will bear it you have only yourself to blame and you will suffer for it if you slap away wisdom's hand you'll suffer for that the best thing that you can do brothers and sisters for yourself in light of all of the book of

Proverbs is not to push away wisdom's hand it's to take wisdom's hand and walk in her way of blessing of life choose wisdom and you choose abounding gain that is her way that's where she leads so let me just draw this to a close by saying this Proverbs 9 depicts two ways to live as two different leading ladies in great contrast offering two different destinations lady wisdom biblical wonder woman offers life lady folly charela de vil offers death it's a good summary of the book of proverbs as a whole choose wisdom and live i'm reminded of two other ladies in the book of revelation one is the pure faithful bride of the lamb and she represents a symbol of the church she suffers until the lamb returns and then he he with his own hand takes away every tear from their eyes and we will dwell with him in his presence in his place forever the church is the lamb's lady and we walk by lady wisdom and we live but then there's the great prostitute the plaything of the beast the world scoffs at

Jesus lives it up now but what she has to wait for her is the second death with the beast the world the beast's babe follows after folly and suffers death let's live for the lamb christ the king church let's walk by wisdom and experience a life that will culminate into seeing his face with him let's pray lord lord jesus we do thank you so much for the book of proverbs lord jesus we are so grateful that you are wisdom incarnate god help us lord jesus help us to walk the way of wisdom in this present time we find ourselves in to walk through this pandemic to walk through the racial tensions we're in to walk through the political rancor we're all experiencing the weariness the i don't want to talk about it syndrome the just calgon take me away lord jesus take us away better yet we trust you are with us give us the wisdom the only you can it's in jesus name we pray amen let's stand we pray all you don't die like we you wantiyou yourself men say