

Proverbs Chapters 8-9 - John Karmelich

1. I call this lesson, "The who, what, where's and why's of wisdom". I was going to call it "In Conclusion", but it's not the end of the book and all those "w's" in the title are catchier. ☺
 - a) In this lesson, we wrap up a nine-chapter section on the discussion of wisdom. That word wisdom, as it is used in the bible, is the application of God's will for our lives.
 - b) In other words, it's not good enough to know right from wrong, it is about applying it.
 - c) Many of the verses in this chapter get into the "who" question: That is, it is describing "who" this wisdom is coming from. Obviously, there is more to the answer than saying, "Wisdom comes from God", or else we would just have a statement to that fact.
 - d) Many of the verses get into "why" wisdom is important to our lives.
 - e) Many of the verses get into the "what" issue. In other words, we have examples of what is wisdom and how it benefits our lives.
 - f) Finally, there are verses on the "where" issue: This is where wisdom can be found.
2. Beginning in the next chapter, we are going to have proverbs as we think of them. That is, short little two line sayings and riddles.
 - a) Chapters 1 through 9 are more of a poetic narrative that discusses the topic of wisdom.
 - b) Since these are the last two chapters, it wraps up this topic. That's why I was thinking of calling this lesson: "In Conclusion". There is a style to these chapters, in that it wraps up some of the key points made in earlier chapters, as well as adding new points.
 - c) What is to be learned in this lesson is why wisdom is so important, what to apply about wisdom, why it's so important to know the source of wisdom and where it is located.
3. Let me put all of this another way: Part of living the Christian life is to be "God-like". That does not mean we have God's power or insight. What it means is we are to like the things God likes, love the things God loves and hate the things God hates. That is what "godliness" is all about. We're going to get into some of those characteristics in these two chapters.
 - a) If God is in charge, then we are to obey Him. We are to obey His commandments. The do's and don'ts of living the Christian life are all through the bible. We do get a little of that in these two chapters. The "how" question of living a life pleasing to God is blended in with all the "w" questions, i.e., why, what, where and who".
 - b) Confused? Good. ☺ We're now ready to begin.
4. Chapter 8, Verse 1: Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice? ² On the heights along the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand; ³ beside the gates leading into the city, at the entrances, she cries aloud:
 - a) One of the first issues we get to is the "where" question: Where does one get wisdom?
 - i) Verse 1 says, "Wisdom raise(s) her voice".
 - ii) Verse 2 says that wisdom is "where the paths meet".
 - iii) Verse 3 says that wisdom is "besides the gate leading to the city, she cries aloud".
 - iv) What do all of these places have in common? They are all "noticeable" locations. Verse 1 says, "Raise her voice". Verse 2 is where the paths meet. When we think of intersections, we think of places with more traffic. Verse 3 is the entrance to a city. That is another place with a lot of traffic.
 - b) The point is not that one finds wisdom only at busy places. The point is one does not have to travel to special locations to find wisdom. For example, one does not have to go to some special mountain and to meditate alone for a year. The wisdom of God can be found anywhere. That answers the "where" question of where is wisdom.
 - i) Let me put it this way: Does one have to travel to a "special high mountain" to know that stealing and murder is wrong? Does one have to live like a monk to know right from wrong? Of course not. That is the idea being poetically stated in these verses. The idea is wisdom can be found all around us.

- c) Remember that wisdom is the application of knowledge. These places mentioned are where people meet. Part of the idea is we apply wisdom where we interact with people.
 - d) The other implication is "God is everywhere". We are accountable to God everywhere that we go and in all actions of our lives.
 - e) These verses do not mean that God's laws are posted at all of these places. It means we can apply God's wisdom at any time and any place. There is also the sense that God is always there guiding us wherever we go. That is also the "where" answer to wisdom.
5. Verse 4: "To you, O men, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind. ⁵ You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, gain understanding.
- a) In Verses 4 and 5, we get into the "who" question: Who is wisdom for? Notice in Verse 4 it says, "To all mankind". The idea is wisdom is not only for the "saved", but for everyone. The "saved" may apply it more often, but wisdom is not an exclusive club. ☺
 - b) In earlier lessons, I defined the word "simple". It refers to a person who is gullible and will go along with anything at anytime. It refers to a person who lacks the discernment to know right from wrong. The Hebrew word literally means "an open door" in that such a person is open to anything. To such people, Verse 5 says, "gain prudence". That means, the bible is advising us to not go along with anything at anytime. It is advising the naive to think about the decisions one makes in life.
 - c) The other "who" is the foolish. We think of fools as those who are slow to learn. The biblical idea of a fool is different. It is one who doesn't care whether or not they are accountable to God. Psalm 14:1 sums it up well when it says, "The fool has said in his heart there is no God." (NKJV)
 - i) A subtle point is God is trying to reach out to the fool to change his or her ways.
 - d) Let me address the "veterans" reading these verses: If all of this seems basic to you, remember that we are starting to wrap up this nine-chapter introduction about wisdom. This chapter is giving an "in conclusion" type of speech summarizing the key points. If there is an application to veteran Christians, it is one of encouragement. The underlying idea is to keep on seeking God and keep on trying to please God in all that we do.
6. Verse 6: Listen, for I have worthy things to say; I open my lips to speak what is right. ⁷ My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness. ⁸ All the words of my mouth are just; none of them is crooked or perverse.
- a) We are now continuing the "who" section. These verses focus on who is giving us wisdom. The answer is that it is God-based.
 - b) Notice the text does not say, "Wisdom comes from Me, that is God. That should be good enough for you and I don't have to expand on that fact!"
 - i) The point of these verses is that we can trust the source of wisdom, which is God.
 - ii) Let me put it another way: There are people who seek God as if they are choosing food at a cafeteria. They say, "Yes please" to God's grace and blessings and usually say "No thank you" to obedience and change of lifestyle. ☺
 - c) These verses are God saying in effect, "Look, I know what is best for You. I didn't just write these laws to make you feel bad. I, God am trying to help you live a happy and fulfilled life. That requires full obedience. That requires loving the things I love and hating the things I hate."
 - d) Does this mean we have to obey all the Old Testament Laws? For the Christian, the New Testament is our guide on how to interpret the Old Testament. No, we don't do animal sacrifices, as Jesus paid the price for our sins. At the same time, those animal sacrifices remind us just how much God hates sin. That aspect doesn't change in the New Testament.
 - e) The main point here is that all of God's wisdom is applicable to our lives. One cannot pick and choose which parts of the bible one wants to obey.

7. Verse 9: To the discerning all of them are right; they are faultless to those who have knowledge.
 - a) The topic of the moment is still the "who" question.
 - i) In the previous verses, the "who" aspect is dispersing the wisdom (God).
 - ii) In these verses, we are on the topic of who should be receiving this wisdom.
 - b) The "who is receiving" is stated in Verse 9 as "the discerning".
 - i) Let me give a simple illustration. If somebody wants us to lie for them, our brains should think, "Wait a minute. This is a violation of one of God's commandments. Even though I like this person and I want this person to like me, I can't go along with that plan." We have to be brave enough and bold enough to say no and stand by our principals. That is the basic idea of discernment.
 - c) The next phrase says "all of them". The idea is the entire bible is God inspired. Time to veer off topic for a moment: Who decided which books belong in the bible? How do we know what we have (the bible) is complete and God inspired. First of all, the bible says so. Proverbs itself goes out of its way to say that the laws of God are "right" for all people.
 - i) "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2nd Timothy 3:16-17, NIV.)
 - ii) Another validation of the bible has to do with prophecy. Most books of the bible contain some future predictions. The fulfillment of those predictions shows that whoever wrote those predictions, knew the future in advance.
 - iii) Another way of validation is its historical accuracy. There is a tremendous amount of archeological evidence for the bible stories. The other way is manuscripts. We have manuscripts dating back almost 2,000 years and the accuracy compared to the modern versions are almost identical.
 - d) As to the last part of the verse, it is God saying in effect, "I am always right."
 - i) It is easy to think, "Well, the bible may be right here and here, but in this one place, I'm pretty sure I know better. It is only a matter of time until we are proven wrong. A point of this verse is all of God's wisdom is correct for our lives.
8. Verse 10: Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, ¹¹ for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.
 - a) In these two verses, we switch from "who" to "what". The question is now what we do we choose as our primary reason for living? Is it God or something else?
 - b) These verses say in effect that wisdom is more important than money. It is not saying we are to take a vow of poverty or ignore supporting the family. It means that studying God's word and applying it to our lives should be a priority over making money.
 - c) Let me give some examples: If someone tells us to steal something for the sake of the great wealth we should have, it is wrong. We need to apply God's wisdom of not stealing over the desire to illegally acquire such things.
 - i) Another example is the workaholic. I've personally seen many young people give up a social life, give up friends and ignore God all for the sake of "getting ahead". In the end, it doesn't work.
 - ii) Again, the bible is not anti-career or anti-making money. The idea is about putting God first in every aspect of our lives.
9. Verse 12: "I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion.
 - a) Let's quickly define these terms again as they apply to the bible.
 - i) Wisdom -the application of God's knowledge;
 - ii) Prudence - the ability to govern and discipline oneself by the use of reason (Webster's dictionary)
 - iii) Knowledge- This is the "information" itself as written in bible.
 - iv) Discretion - ability to make responsible decisions (Webster's)
 - v) The main idea here is that all of these terms go "hand in hand" with each other.

10. Verse 13: To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech. ¹⁴ Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have understanding and power.
 - a) Of all the verses I struggled with in this lesson, it is Verse 13. The text says that part of "Fearing the Lord" is to hate evil. Let's talk about that hatred for a moment.
 - i) The idea of "fearing the Lord" is to realize we are accountable to God. The idea of "fear" is to fear His judgment on our lives. To please God, we are to love the things He loves and hate the things He hates.
 - ii) It is said, "The sign of a mature Christian is to know how much we love the sinner and how much we hate the sin." The struggle with that verse is if we have sympathy for the sinner, we must forgive the sin (when they ask for forgiveness). The hard part is having an emotional hatred for the sin and then having to forgive that sin, especially when that sin is against us!
 - iii) Let's face it; if we really hated a sin, we are less likely to commit that sin. Our problem (speaking collectively to all of mankind) is we do commit sins because we don't really hate it hard enough! If we really hate what God hates (i.e., sins), we would never sin in the first place.
 - iv) Paul once said, "Be angry, and do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26, quoting Psalm 4:4). Our anger needs to be directed at sin. In order to avoid sin, we need to have a "healthy anger" at the fact we understand it is wrong.
 - v) Getting back to Leviticus, it is mostly about how to deal with sin. It required animal sacrifices. Leviticus has extensive details on how to alleviate sin. My point here is Leviticus, like these verses in Proverbs teach us how much God hates sin.
 - b) The rest of Verse 13 goes on to give us examples of how we sin: It starts with "pride and arrogance". The idea is at any given moment, people want to do their will over God's will. At that point, the "mouth follows" what we are thinking in our heart. That is why the rest of verse 13 says, "evil behavior and perverse speech". The idea is sinful actions follow the sinful desires of one's heart.
 - c) Verse 14 is the antidote to sinful behavior. God is saying in effect, "I have the answers you need and the power you need to act in a way that is pleasing to Me". It is a colorful way of saying for us to choose God's way of living and be obedient to His laws.
11. Verse 15: By me kings reign and rulers make laws that are just; ¹⁶ by me princes govern, and all nobles who rule on earth.
 - a) We are back to the "who" issue. The text says that by wisdom, kings rule, rules make laws, princes govern (that word "princes" means anyone who helps a king rule) and nobles (judges) make good decisions.
 - b) This verse implies that all who rule do their best to have sound judgments. God's "instinctive laws" of right and wrong prevail in making decisions over others.
 - c) I was thinking about this verse in terms of "crooked judges and evil kings". Does this verse imply that all kings and judges rule by God's wisdom? No. A better way of looking at this verse is to say in effect, "If these people want to rule in a way that pleases God, they better follow God's wisdom."
 - d) There is another idea taught in the bible that government is a God-ordained concept. In other words, God desires that some people be in charge to rule over others and some are appointed as judges as to how to best interpret laws. Paul teaches that all leaders are "God appointed" (Romans 13:1) in that God ordains the concept of government.
 - e) I see a hint of prophecy in these verses as well. There is a concept that the saved in Christ will rule during the millennium (Ref.: Revelation 20:6). Jesus also taught His disciples that they would judge the "12 tribes of Israel". (Ref.: Matthew 19:28). Somehow, someway, those who saved are involved in eternal judgment. I see this verse as a prediction that those who obey God get the privilege of judging "one day" with wisdom.

12. Verse 17: I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me.
 - a) The most important thing about this verse is to read it context. The subject is wisdom. This verse can be expanded to read, "I (God) love those who love Me (My wisdom), and those who seek Me (My wisdom) find Me."
 - b) This does not mean that if we have God's wisdom, we can be perfect all the time. We can have the discernment to make the right decisions. God gives us all we need to make those decisions.
 - c) One can ask, "If I have God's wisdom, why do I make bad decisions even after I have prayed about it?" The answer is sometimes God allows us to learn from those mistakes. Sometimes God is silent as to teach us to walk by faith. The point is the bible gives us the general principals to live by so we can make good decisions.
13. Verse 18: With me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity. ¹⁹ My fruit is better than fine gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver. ²⁰ I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice, ²¹ bestowing wealth on those who love me and making their treasuries full.
 - a) In these verses, we are on the "why" issue: Why should we choose wisdom? The answer in this text is that it brings us "riches, honor, enduring wealth (as opposed to temporary wealth) and prosperity.
 - b) As I've stated in previous lessons, God's wisdom is not a guarantee of financial prosperity in one's lifetime. Christians through the centuries have lived under oppressive governments and lived hard, poor lives in many situations. In such blessed societies as the United States, one can be more financially blessed and have the discernment on how to spend one's earnings properly for prosperity.
 - c) My main point is that God is talking about eternal blessings. One of the blessings for obedience to God is to be resurrected into heaven.
 - i) With that said, I don't think the focus is so much on the next life as it is on this life. We can be blessed in this life for obedience to God no matter what the situation is all around us.
14. Verse 22: "The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old;
 - a) From Verse 22 to Verse 31, we are going to get "wisdom speaking in the first person". These verses read as if wisdom is doing the talking. This "person" wisdom is also describing God as a separate entity.
 - b) These verses get back to the "who" question. They ask in effect, "Who is giving us this wisdom" in a poetic way.
 - i) The essential idea of these verses is that "Wisdom is as old as God Himself". Not that God has a defining moment of birth. The point is the wisdom of God has been around as long as God has Himself.
 - c) Commentators debate about whether or not these verses hint of either God the Son or God the Holy Spirit. Neither the word "spirit" nor "son" are used in these verses. At the same time, the word wisdom is not used either. You can make a case that wisdom does refer to a separate entity from God the Father. The Holy Spirit is spoken of as "wisdom" in Isaiah 11:2. Obviously, God the Father and God the Son have a bit of wisdom too! ☺
 - i) The idea is to grasp the concept of wisdom as being part of God, but still a separate "thing", just like one's personality is part of us, but still separate.
 - d) Meanwhile, back at Verse 22: ☺ The verse says, "The LORD brought me forth".
 - i) Reading this in context, the word "me" would refer to wisdom. Again, the word "wisdom" is not in these ten verses. Only pronouns are used. Still, if one reads these verses in context of the surrounding verses, they refer to God's wisdom.
 - ii) This sentence in the verse implies that God "gave birth" to wisdom. I doubt that a maternity ward was used. ☺ The point is God Himself is bigger than just the concept of wisdom. God has wisdom and used His wisdom prior to creation as we know it. That will become more apparent over the next several verses.

- e) The rest of the verse reads, "The first of his works, before his deeds of old".
 - i) The idea is God's wisdom existed before the universe was created.
 - ii) The implication is God did not say one day, "You know, I'm bored, let me throw some of this "creation stuff" against the wall and see what happens! ☺
 - iii) The idea is God "thought out carefully" how the world was to be created. The application is we can trust God as the world was carefully made for our living.
 - f) Most high school kids have heard how carefully "balanced" the earth is.
 - i) For example, if the earth's average temperature was a few degrees warmer or colder, we could not survive. If the sun were a little closer or farther, we could not survive. Even the orbit pattern of the moon is "balanced" for our survival.
 - ii) The point of all of this "balance" is people don't stop to consider the implication: This implies there is a God that balanced it perfectly in the first place! The idea as it ties to Proverbs is that God used wisdom in the creation of the world!
15. Verse 23: I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began.
- a) Verse 23 continues the thought from the previous verse. It emphasizes the fact that wisdom was around prior to the creation of the universe as we know it.
 - b) The underlying point is we can trust God. He is saying to us in effect, "Look, you people live in an atmosphere created by Me. It is a delicately balanced for your survival. If you can trust Me with the wisdom to create the universe, you should also trust that Me with the instructional wisdom I give you to lead a fulfilled life!"
16. Verse 24: When there were no oceans, I was given birth, when there were no springs abounding with water; ²⁵ before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth, ²⁶ before he made the earth or its fields or any of the dust of the world.
- a) These verses continue the poetic way of saying, "Before the earth was created, wisdom existed." The main point of these verses is God used wisdom in creating the world.
 - b) Why is this so important to know?
 - i) It refutes the idea that the world existed by random chance.
 - ii) It reminds us that there "is" a God who created everything, and therefore we can trust His wisdom in our lives.
 - iii) These verses answer the question, "How can I trust God's wisdom?" The answer is wisdom existed in the first place, prior to creation.
 - iv) To put it another way, if God used wisdom in His decisions on how to create the world, we should be also use that same source of wisdom as we go through our lives. The idea is wisdom (the idea of how to apply God's laws to our lives) should be a part of our lives.
17. Verse 27: I was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, ²⁸ when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, ²⁹ when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command, and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.
- a) These verses continue to give an account of creation from the perspective of "wisdom".
 - b) Those who study astrology or geology are endlessly fascinated by all the physical details about our world. One can enjoy and marvel at God's creation. With these verses in mind, we can realize that God had wisdom in this creation. Again, the idea is that the world was not created "haphazardly", but wisely for its survival and our survival.
 - c) I should define "heavens" here: The term "heavens" does not refer to where we live in the next life. The word "heaven" as it used in the bible refers to three places: The "first heaven" is the sky and atmosphere above the earth. The "second heaven" is the stars. The "third heaven" is what we think of heaven. Paul said he was once caught up to the "third heaven". (2nd Corinthians 12:2). The word "heavens" as it is used in this passage refers to the first and second heavens.

- d) Also, notice the term "horizon on the face of the deep". That term, as it is written in the original Hebrew language implies that the world is a sphere in its shape. Those who say, "The bible argues the world was flat" have never studied it carefully enough.
 - e) Next, notice the term "the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command". This refers to the idea the sea does not cover the entire world, but there are land masses. It is God that "commanded" land to exist. An idea to comprehend is that nature does not control God, but God controls nature.
 - f) Getting back to the "who, what, where's and why's of wisdom", the important thing to understand here about wisdom is the "where": It was with God when He made the world in the first place. Remember Proverbs is trying to get us to be obedient to God. This text is saying in effect, "God made this place in the first place. It is His world, not ours. He is in control, not us. The proper way to enjoy and appreciate life is to comprehend those facts. God then lays out instructions for us on how to have a happy life. The next step is to get the knowledge to have wisdom, and then applying that wisdom to our lives."
18. Verse 30: Then I was the craftsman at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, ³¹ rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind.
- a) These two verses wrap up this ten-verse section where wisdom is talking in the first person. Wisdom is a "living thing" in these verses. Wisdom is saying, "I was working with God as the world was created."
 - b) A few pages back, I suggested that these verses hint of Messianic references. These verses give wisdom a living personality. Some have suggested a "Messiah-like" nature to wisdom in that it is a separate entity that existed with God in the beginning. That would fit the model of Christian thought and even some Jewish thought.
 - i) At the least, these verses are "just" a poetic way of saying wisdom was around prior to the creation of the world. It is a possibility that the verses are also hinting at God the Son or God the Holy Spirit's eternal existence. One can build a biblical case either way. My point is if you see these verses as just talking about God and wisdom, one is on "safe biblical ground". If one sees these verses as hints of the eternal existence of Jesus and/or the Holy Spirit, one can build that case as well.
 - c) Remember that a goal of Christians is to become "god-like" in the sense we are to love the things God loves and hate the things God hates. This includes His love is for people and His hatred is of sin. With that said, notice the "rejoicing" of wisdom in the creation.
 - i) In other words, if God's creation makes Him happy, it should make us happy. I believe it is God's intent for us to enjoy His creation and beauty.
 - ii) In other words, God is pro-camping. ☺ These verses don't mean we ignore our responsibilities to go travel. At the same time, if one has the resources and opportunity to spend time with nature, we are to appreciate what God has made.
 - d) Notice the last phrase is "delighting in mankind". Again, we are to love what God loves, and that means having joy in relationships with other people.
19. Verse 32: "Now then, my sons, listen to me; blessed are those who keep my ways. ³³ Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not ignore it.
- a) Every now and then in the first nine chapters of Proverbs, God sort of yells out "Get wisdom! Your happiness depends upon it! Don't ignore what I am teaching you!"
 - b) Let me paraphrase the last ten verses on creation from God's perspective: "Listen up everybody. I didn't just make the world because I had nothing better to do! ☺ I made the world for your enjoyment. I love people and want to spend eternity with them. I created a great world for people to live in. I want them to be happy and have an intimate relationship with Me. I, God used wisdom in making this place and I want people to use My wisdom in living out their lives."
 - c) These "Get wisdom" verses are God pleading with us to live a happy and fulfilled life. Remember God will not violate our free will and force His wisdom upon us. At the same

time, God wants us to live this way "so bad" He sort of yells out every now and then "Get and use My wisdom" to tell us how to live our lives.

- d) "But John, the term "Get wisdom" is not in this verse!" Thanks for pointing that out. ☺
 - i) The text does say, "Listen to me" and "keep my ways". That is another way of God saying for us to get wisdom. In other words, God is pleading with us to be obedient to Him and what He wants for our lives.

20. Verse 34: Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway.

- a) Notice the text says, "watching daily at my doors". How do we wait at God's doors? Where is God's doorway? Can we reach the doorbell? ☺ The answer is right where you are at this moment! This sentence is a poetic way of saying God is always watching us.
 - i) It is also saying our behavior on earth determines whether or not we get into heaven. That is God's "doorway" between heaven and earth.
 - ii) I always have to add the disclaimer that I believe God makes exceptions for babies and children who die young. Personally, that's God's problem to worry about. It's hard enough to comprehend that I am accountable to God with my own life!
- b) A point of this verse is that wisdom is not only for living a happy life, it also determines our entrance into heaven. The Christian life is all about obedience to God. Yes, we are saved by faith, but the evidence of that faith is how it affects our behavior.

21. Verse 35: For whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the LORD. ³⁶ But whoever fails to find me harms himself; all who hate me love death."

- a) Verse 35 and 36 are teaching the same concept. Verse 35 teaches the benefits of wisdom with a positive statement and Verse 36 warns of the danger of ignoring God with a negative statement. The verses are saying in effect, "whoever finds wisdom finds life and whoever doesn't find wisdom "harms himself".
- b) We are now back to the "who" question on the receiving end of wisdom: The question is who is the person who finds and doesn't find wisdom, and what are they like?
 - i) Verse 35 says the person who finds me (wisdom) finds life. Obviously many people ignore God and still live a long life. The idea of "finding life" has nothing to do with length of life, but with the purpose of life.
 - ii) God created us to fulfill His purpose. That purpose is to give glory to Him in all that we do. When we minister to others, we are giving glory to God. When we pray for others, we are giving glory to God. Obedience to God is glorifying Him!
 - iii) What being born-again does, besides the salvation thing, ☺ is it gives one a purpose for living greater than just living for oneself. There is a wonderful sense of satisfaction to life knowing that one is making a difference for God.
- c) Verse 36 says those who fail to "find me" harm themselves.
 - i) Stop and think about this logically: People who steal end up harming themselves. People who deal with addictions harm their lives. People who commit adultery hurt themselves and those around them. This statement is self-evident.
- d) Finally, Verse 36 says those who hate God "love death".
 - i) For what it is worth, I know an atheist or two and they appear to be well adjusted and don't have any suicidal tendencies. That is not what this verse is saying.
 - ii) The idea of "love death" is they willfully choose to turn away from God. C.S. Lewis is famous for the quote of, "The gates of hell will be locked from the inside." He meant that hell a place where people choose to go as they refuse to obey God. That is what is meant by "love death". It is the idea they are willfully choosing to disobey God and His desires for their lives.

22. Chapter 9, Verse 1: Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars.
- a) We've made it to the last-of-nine chapter section on Proverbs! We're still in the process of summarizing the "Who, what, when and why's" of wisdom. Beginning here in Chapter 9, we get into the "what" question. That is, the question of what is wisdom.
 - i) In Verses 1-6 of this chapter, we have a poetic answer to this question. What will be obvious is that these verses are not literal. For example, Verse 1 says, "wisdom has built her house". Obviously, wisdom can't grab a hold of wood and nails, so the verse must be saying something else.
 - b) What this verse, and the next few verses are going to say, is that if we choose to follow God, we will live the full, rich life that God desires for us.
 - c) It might be best to quote Jesus here. He said, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock." (Matthew 7:25-26 NIV)
 - i) Notice the similarity of Jesus point to the concept of "built his house on the rock" as it is stated here in Proverbs 9:1 statement of "Wisdom has built her house".
 - ii) The idea is if we have a good foundation of God's word in our lives, that knowledge helps us to make good decisions in life. Knowing what God wants of us helps us to decide right from wrong.
 - iii) The other benefit should be our attitude. We know that no matter what life throws our way, we are still saved. God is able to rescue us and comfort us in any and all situations in life. That is also part of this word picture of a good foundation.
 - d) The second part of this verse says, "She (wisdom) has hewn out its seven pillars."
 - i) Pillars hold up things. Pillars are associated with support. The number seven in the bible is associated with "completeness". Just as God rested on the seventh day from creation, the idea of "seven" is that one's work is now completed. The idea of "seven pillars" is that wisdom provides the complete support for our lives.
 - ii) The idea of this phrase is God's commandments for our lives provide the information we need to make wise decisions in life.
23. Verse 2: She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table.
- a) In Verse 2, we move from a house construction word-picture to a food word picture.
 - b) This verse is comparing the idea of living a wise life to eating a big banquet.
 - i) The idea of "prepared her meat" means the meat is ready to eat. The idea is wisdom has been "fully prepared" for us. The idea of "mixed her wine" is a Middle East custom of watering down the wine so it isn't so strong. (Often spices were added to compensate for the delusion.)
 - ii) The verse is saying in effect, "dinner's ready". That means God's wisdom is fully ready to make decisions in life.
 - iii) The final metaphor is also similar. It says, "Wisdom has set the table". Again, it ties to our expression of "dinner's ready". The idea is God's commands and God's wisdom provides us all we need to make decisions for our life.
 - c) Let's get practical for a moment: Does this mean I never have to read any other books or study other information? Of course not. What this section of Proverbs is teaching us is that the bible provides the foundation principals that we need to make good decisions as we go through our lives.
 - i) Sometimes the decisions we have to make are more obvious than others. To use illustrations I've given earlier, if those decisions involve, say stealing or lying, we can use our knowledge of biblical commandments to decide right from wrong.
 - ii) The tough decisions of life are not so obvious. There's are proverbs coming up that says in effect, before one has to make a big decision, talk to several people about it and get good counseling. (See Proverbs 11:14, 15:22 and 24:6.)

- iii) Sometimes after praying about tough decisions and even seeking good counsel, the answer may still be difficult to discern. Sometimes for situations like this, I'll pray, "Lord, bless it our block it". Then I choose what I believe is best.
 - iv) Let me also apply this to the business world. Often, the worse mistake one can make on "day one" is making an investment that appears to be a good deal. Even if it is a good deal, if one is young and naive, one doesn't yet know it is a good deal. One has to study that market, do the research of their field, and then one can know if it a good deal or not. My point is wisdom often comes after getting an education on the subject. The same applies to God's word. One has to spend time studying a subject in order to make wise decisions.
- d) Meanwhile, let's get back to the "dinner's ready, come and eat" illustration of wisdom:

24. Verse 3: She has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city. ⁴ "Let all who are simple come in here!" she says to those who lack judgment. ⁵ "Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. ⁶ Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding.

 - a) I've stated many times in the past few lessons, Proverbs has this way of yelling out every now and then, "Get wisdom!" In a sense, that is what is happening here.
 - b) The illustration here is comparing wisdom to a woman that has just prepared a big banquet of great food and then yells out, "Hey anyone and everyone, come and eat!"
 - c) At the opening of Chapter 8, we had the concept that wisdom was at the "crossroads" and the "gates of the city" yelling out to naive people to get wise. That is what we have here as well. The text is saying in effect, "Wisdom is good for our lives. We can learn it at anytime and anyplace. Come on now, before it is too late, the food's getting cold!" ☺

25. Verse 7: "Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult; whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse. ⁸Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you;

 - a) It is probably best at this point to define a "mocker". It is a person that has already made up his or her mind on a topic before the issue is brought up. When the mocker is asked a question on a topic they hate, they give a sarcastic or flippant way of stating their anger. The mocker is angry at being asked the question, and therefore gives a "put down" answer to the issue.
 - i) The idea of a mocker as it applies to God is that it refers to a person who has already willfully made the mental decision to not believe in God and to turn from God's ways for their lives. Usually they are angry at God. When the discussion of God or religion comes up, they usually make some sort of sarcastic put-down.
 - b) With all that in mind, it is best to re-read these verses. It will make more sense. The essential idea of these verses is to only teach people who are willing to learn.
 - c) This reminds me of another of my favorite expressions: "Never try to teach a pig to sing. It's a waste of your time and it irritates the pig". The point is not to waste our time trying to teach someone not willing to learn in the first place!

26. Verse 8 (cont.): rebuke a wise man and he will love you. ⁹ Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.

 - a) The last part of Verse 8 and all of Verse 9 teach the corollary to Verse 7 and Verse 8a. In other words, it is waste of time to teach biblical wisdom to someone who doesn't want to learn in the first place. It is never a waste of time to teach someone who wants to learn.
 - b) The point of these three verses is to have discernment over who we teach. Some people just don't want to learn. We'll recognize those "mockers" as they get insulting and sarcastic very quick when we bring up topics like God and wisdom. The point is for us not to waste time with such people.
 - c) The corollary here is that some people are interested. Let's face it, many people go to church on Sundays and are willing to listen and be teachable. The point is both types of people exist in the world and we are to have the discernment as who to reach out to.

- d) The first part of Verse 9 is special to me: "Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still". My whole bible study ministry is based on this principal. The idea is that some people are interested in growing in God. Some people are interested in growing in wisdom. Some are willing to put up with my bad jokes in exchange with growing closer to God. ☺ Verse 9 is one of the verses that inspired me to start this bible-writing project.
27. Verse 10: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
- a) Verse 10, Part 1 is a repeat quote of Chapter 1, Verse 7.
- i) We are now nine verses away from finishing this nine-chapter section on wisdom. In other words, this whole nine-chapter section on wisdom "starts" and "ends" with the concept of, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom".
- b) To explain the concept again, one cannot apply all of God's wisdom unless one believes in God in the first place. One has to understand and accept one is accountable to God as a motivation for applying God's laws to our lives.
- c) Can an atheist live a moral life and apply some of these principals? Of course. I will argue I have yet to see the atheist trust in all of God's principals. Most of God's laws are logical, but some require in the belief of the existence of God (e.g., taking a day off from work to go to church and praying to God).
- d) The main idea is for us to understand we are accountable to God. If we accept that fact and have a "healthy fear" of that accountability, that will motivate us to obedience.
28. Verse 11: For through me your days will be many, and years will be added to your life. ¹² If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer."
- a) We end this section on "Get wisdom" with another reminder of how we will be blessed. The bible promises, "years will be added to our lives".
- i) One can argue it applies to our salvation.
- ii) I'll also argue that living a life pleasing to God makes us less stressful. That alone should (generally speaking) add years to our lives.
- b) Verse 12 gives us another "either/or" example. It says in effect that if we seek wisdom, we will be rewarded for our efforts and if we turn from God, we will suffer for it.
- c) Let me talk for a moment on the phrase, "You alone will suffer". The last part of Verse 12 says in effect that if we turn from God, we suffer alone.
- i) We all know that when we sin, usually innocent people get hurt. How can the text say, "You alone will suffer"? I believe this refers to eternal condemnation. The idea is no one is sent to hell for the sins of others.
- ii) The idea of "You alone will suffer" also means that the "mocker" doesn't get the benefit of wisdom. It won't affect wisdom's ability to help other people.
29. Verse 13: The woman Folly is loud; she is undisciplined and without knowledge.
- a) Remember I call this lesson, "The who, what, where's and why's of wisdom". We are now back to the "who" issue. In these last seven verses, we discuss who is not wisdom.
- b) In these seven verses, they are describing a woman named "Folly". Obviously, this is not a literal woman named Folly, but a word picture of someone turning from God's wisdom.
- i) Let's define "folly". It is "lack of good sense or normal prudence and foresight". (Webster's Dictionary). In other words, it is the opposite of wisdom. It is a person who makes bad judgment calls in life. That is the "woman" described here.
- ii) The first thing said is she is "loud". Just as God is trying to entice us to do the right thing, there is always someone coming along to entice us to do the wrong thing.
- iii) Next, she is "undisciplined". To apply wisdom requires discipline. To do the right thing often means to say no or be unpopular.
- iv) Finally, she is "without knowledge". This one is a little more self-explanatory. If such a person never studies God's word, they don't have the knowledge to make the right decisions in the first place.

- c) Notice how this nine-chapter section on Proverbs ends on a "negative note". It ends with seven verses giving warnings about the danger of turning away from wisdom.
 - i) I'll suggest that this section ends with these negative seven verses as that is the way our minds work best. We need that final warning of consequences in order to help us. This is God saying, "If you listen to Me, you will be blessed. If you don't, here is what will happen to you in the end!"
 - d) Remember that wisdom is described as a "she" in these nine chapters. It does not mean wisdom is a literal woman. It is a metaphor. In these last nine verses, we have a female called "Folly" that is an illustration of someone who turns away from God's wisdom.
 - i) Remember these nine chapters are written by a father to a son. If wisdom is a "she" and folly is a "she", it is the father telling the son which is the right and wrong type of woman to pick as a life-long partner.
30. Verse 14: She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city, ¹⁵ calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way. ¹⁶ "Let all who are simple come in here!"
- a) If there is one thing all adults and older kids understand, is that the temptation to sin is always there, and it is always calling out to us. I've also learned that sin never dies of old age. Why is that? Temptation is part of God's "motivational plan" to stick close to Him! If we didn't need God's help to be strong against temptation, we wouldn't talk to Him as often. It is God's way of keeping us close to Him in communication through prayer.
 - b) With all of that in mind, the word pictures of these two verses make a little more sense. These verses are describing a woman called "folly". This woman "folly" is not quietly sitting at home where nobody can hear her. She's at the door of house or the "highest point of the city". The point is those who rebel from God are inviting others to join them!
 - i) Why is that? Why do people who want to turn from God look for others to join them? Part of the answer is we all seek approval for the decisions we make in life. There is an internal sense of guilt of what we are doing may be wrong. One feels less guilty if others want to join in on their actions.
31. Verse 16 (cont.): She says to those who lack judgment. ¹⁷ "Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!" ¹⁸ But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of the grave.
- a) The final warning of this chapter and this section of Proverbs are saying in effect that sin is enticing. Let's fact it, if sin was not enticing, no one would sin. There has to be some short term benefit to sin or else people wouldn't commit that sin in the first place.
 - b) What "folly" is about is not thinking about the long term consequences of those sins. There is always a price to pay when one turns from God. There is always "hell to pay".
 - c) I'll end this section with a quote from James, "Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." (James 1:15 NIV).
32. I want to end this lesson on wisdom with two things that happened to my family this week.
- a) The first is a friend that spent the night at our house a few days back. Her husband has an addiction problem and lied to her about where he was.
 - b) The second is a friend of my daughter. This young girl goes to church because a neighbor brings her to church. This girl has never met her father. This girl watched her mother get arrested last week for charges relating to her drug addiction. My wife and I take this girl out to lunch with us after church for the past month if for no other reason, to show her what a "fairly healthy" family looks like.
 - c) I'm not writing about these two examples to brag about our family. Lord knows we have our own problems and issues. (If you know our family personally, I ask that you don't contact us to ask the names. We want to keep the names private.)
 - d) My point of all of this is to see how wisdom and the lack of wisdom affects the lives of those around us. Sometimes "wisdom" is best seen when one looks around us.

- e) Sometimes we don't realize how well we are applying wisdom until we see the lives of other people around us. Again, I'm not saying this to imply that I'm better than the next person. I'm saying this as I see the pain caused by the sin around me this week, it reminded me how much pain there is as people make the decisions to turn from God.
 - f) The reason Proverbs 1-9 are written is God doesn't like to watch all of this pain occur. God is reaching out to people and saying in effect, "You don't have to keep living this way! You don't have to suffer the consequences of sin! You can turn to Me and make your life better".
 - i) Yes, we have to deal with the sin around us. That is part of life. At the same time, we can apply God's laws to our lives as to minimize the amount of sin we have to deal with in our own lives.
33. With all that said, we are now done describing the "who, what, when and why" of Proverbs. If you can handle the first nine chapters, you can handle the rest of the book! Beginning in the next lesson, the writing style changes significantly, but not the main theme of wisdom. I'll talk about that more in the next lesson.
34. Let's pray: Father, help us to be wise. Help us to remember that we are accountable to You in all that we do. The way to live a life pleasing to You begins with prayer. Help us to be strong against temptation. Give us the wisdom, the discernment and the boldness to make decisions that are pleasing to You in all that we do. Finally, help us to be good witnesses to others around us. Help us to use our time wisely for You and avoid the "mockers" of life. Guide us through our day. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.