

Good morning.

Our reading today is Proverbs 9.

Wisdom has built her house.

She has hewn her seven pillars.

She has slaughtered her beasts.

She has mixed her wine.

She has also set her table.

She has sent out her young women to call.

from the high places in the town.

Whoever is simple, let him turn in here.

To him who lacks sense, she says, come, eat my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed.

Leave your simple ways and live, and walk in the way of insight.

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.

Reprove a wise man, and he will love you.

Give instruction to a wise man and he will still be wiser.

Teach a righteous man and he will increase in learning.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

For by me days will be multiplied and years will be added to your life.

If you are wise, you are wise for yourself.

If you scoff, you alone will bear it.

The woman folly is loud.

She is seductive and knows nothing.

She sits at the door of her house.

She takes a seat on the highest places of the town, calling to those who pass by who are going straight on their way.

Whoever is simple, let him turn in here.

And to him who lacks sense, she says, stolen water is sweet and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.

But she does not know that the dead are there.

that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

There we go.

Thanks, Jared.

Let's bow our heads and ask for the Lord's help one more time this morning.

Heavenly Father, only you can open our eyes to see your glory

to see you in such a way that we are in awe and wonder, to see you in such a way that we know you with our heads and our hearts and all that we are.

So Lord, we ask you to open eyes this morning, open our eyes to see you more clearly, to see you more rightly.

And Lord, would you work what we see down into us so that even though we may be confronted with things we don't like about ourselves, Lord, that you would give us the strength and the strength of faith to trust your good promises for us that will ultimately transform us from the inside out.

Would you do that for us this morning as we open your word?

We pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

So we've come to the end of Solomon's intro to the book of Proverbs and thus we've come to the end of our series on Proverbs.

Next week we'll be starting back in the book of John.

We'll be picking up where we left off at the end of John 3 and spending a lot of time with the woman at the well and some of the scenes after that as well.

But for now we're wrapping up the book of Proverbs and

This intro that Solomon's been giving us throughout the summer ends appropriately with Solomon's so what.

You can kind of think of it this way.

I'll explain the structure in a second.

But Solomon's really trying to put right in our face a decision that we have to make between wisdom and folly, or really between being a wise person and being a scoffer.

So Solomon's main goal, as we've said, with the book of Proverbs is to motivate his sons and thus us to seek wisdom and to seek it hard, right?

Not to just dabble in wisdom or to occasionally go after wisdom.

but to seek wisdom hard with all that we have.

And now he's made his case, he's made his warnings, and he's clearly laying out two paths for us.

On the one side, we've got Lady Wisdom and her grand and sophisticated house.

And on the other side, we've got Woman Folly and her house of death.

And so he's painting these two pictures of women and houses on either side.

And we've got to decide, right?

We've got to decide which house we're going to, what path,
we're going to take.

Again, in essence, Solomon's aim here with chapter nine is to give us the, so what?

So what now?

Really, so what are you going to do?

This is a very personal chapter.

He's looking us in the eye, asking us, what are you going to do now with all of the warnings, all of the wisdom that I've given to you in these other chapters?

And it's a question we all have to wrestle with, whether we're willing to wrestle with it or not.

And graciously, graciously, the Lord, through Solomon, not just merely draws our attention to the question, but he also helps us to answer it.

So he helps us to see that there's this question before all of us, whether we acknowledge it or not.

And then he helps us to answer the question rightly and wisely.

And we'll see this morning in chapter 9 that if we accept wisdom's invitation or the way that we accept wisdom's invitation to life and righteousness is by fearing and knowing the Lord.

So we go to wisdom's house.

We accept the invitation that Lady Wisdom is giving us to life and righteousness by fearing and knowing the Lord.

This chapter is a chiasm.

I've talked about this more when we were in the Psalms.

But a chiasm, you can think of it as a funnel, right?

So the first point and the last point correspond.

So you're way out here, first point, last point.

And then the second point and the second to last point correspond.

And it's really made to funnel you into the middle of the passage.

And that's kind of the main point or the thesis is found in the middle.

And the author brings us down into the middle and then back out again, relating some things back to the main point.

So we're going to see here this chiasm that we're looking at here in Proverbs 9.

That's the last I'm going to talk about chisms this morning, by the way.

All right, just wanted to give you the basic visual.

After that, we're not going to nerd out on it.

But the basic, the chiasm that's here, though, is kind of two contrasts leading up to a compound, right?

So contrast is one versus the other.

A compound is like both and.

We're going to join two things together.

So the contrasts are lady wisdom versus woman folly.

And then the second contrast is the wise person versus the scoffer.

And then the compound in the middle is the fear and the knowledge of the Lord.

Right.

So Solomon's kind of like this versus this, this or this.

And then in the middle, it's both in the fear and the knowledge of the Lord.

So we're just going to break it down that way.

Right.

First contrast, lady wisdom versus woman folly.

We see this in verses one to six and then at the end of the chapter in verses 13 to 18.

So verses one to six here in chapter nine, wisdom has built her house.

She has hewn her seven pillars.

She has slaughtered her beasts.

She has mixed her wine.

She has also set her table.

She has sent her young women to call from the highest places in the town.

Whoever is simple, let them turn here.

To him who lacks sense, she says.

Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed.

Leave your simple ways and leave and walk in the way of insight.

And then 13 to 18, we have the opposite here, woman folly.

The woman folly is loud.

She's seductive and knows nothing.

She sits at the door of her house.

She takes a seat on the highest places of the town, calling to those who pass by, who are going straight on their path.

Whoever is simple, let him turn in here.

And to him who lacks sense, she says, stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.

But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

We have one similarity here, and pretty much just one, that both of these ladies, or the lady wisdom and woman folly here, are both calling.

They're both in a common place, out where they're going to meet people, and they're calling out primarily to the simple, saying, hey, if you lack sense, if you're simple, come here, I have something to offer you.

Again, the mental image that we're given here are two women on either side of the street.

Lady Wisdom on the one side, Woman Folly on the other.

Lady Wisdom is pictured as diligently preparing a very sophisticated, highbrow,

Quality feast right for her for her guests in this finely crafted like massive home She's preparing meat and she's skillfully mixing wine with spices where she's not watering it down.

That's not what he's talking about She's mixing with mixing it with spices Making it better.

This is something that really only the wealthy did on special occasions and her home has seven pillars that are hewn right communicating again hard-earned wealth and skill and

And she sends her young women to make the invitation on her behalf while she's diligently preparing this feast, which is kind of a picture of God sending his prophets and his teachers out into the world to invite any who would hear it to this feast.

So the bottom line and what we're supposed to see here is that there's nothing cheap, right?

There's nothing gaudy about this scene.

It's deep, it's rich.

It's sophisticated.

It's a place you want to be full of skill and depth, which is contrasted against woman folly, right?

Who's kind of sitting on the stoop of her house, seductively dressed.

Her house, however, the stoop she's sitting on is just kind of this movie-propped front that looks great from the street.

But the inside is filthy, condemned, and there's just bodies strewn everywhere, right?

The dead are there, Solomon says.

And she's offering, what she's calling out and offering is not a deep, sophisticated meal, but rather she's offering cheap thrills, right?

Stolen water, secret bread.

But as she's offering, with the one hand, these cheap thrills, she's hiding with the other the real cost, which is your life.

And the contrast couldn't be any clearer here at the beginning and at the end of this chapter.

Lady Wisdom and her invitation to a deep, rich life and woman folly with her temptation of very costly, immediate gratification.

And Lady Wisdom's invitation is very clear and specific.

Look back at verse 6.

Leave your simple ways and live and walk in the way of insight.

Leave your simple ways and live and walk in the way of insight.

Leave your simple ways, live, walk, repent, in other words, turn from your sin, leave, experience the new birth and God's life-giving power, live, and now walk or develop new habits and patterns that are true and holy.

We know that this most profoundly happens to us once.

Drew helpfully read from Ephesians quite a bit in his testimony.

We're right up at the front of the book.

We're told that this happens to us once, our justification, right?

Where we leave, we turn from our sin, we're made alive.

We experience that new birth.

in our walk and in our daily habits.

Paul actually uses that word walk quite a bit in the book of Ephesians to lay out the patterns and way of life, our daily way of life, that is to be true and holy.

So we experience that most profoundly once, but we also experience this on a daily basis.

We also must experience this on a daily basis.

That's called our sanctification.

Daily, we're called to leave

To live, right, and to walk, to look, to leave our sin, to remember our identity in Christ and who we are, the new birth that he's given us, and to walk in that.

And we see this everyday nature of the invitation kind of in the next level of contrast.

So we've got lady wisdom, woman folly.

But then Solomon talks about the wise versus the scoffer.

Look at verses 7 to 9.

In verses 7 to 9, we see the difference between the wise and the scoffer and how they handle correction.

7 to 9 says, 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.

Reprove a wise man, and he will love you.

Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser.

Teach a righteous man, and he will increase wisdom.

and learning.

So what is a scoffer?

It's not a word we use every day.

The important thing to see in the book of Proverbs about scoffers is that there's no hope offered to scoffers.

There's invitations made to the simple, and there's hope offered to the fools.

But scoffers, they're just outright rejected and neglected.

So what is it about scoffers that makes them so bad, right?

Like the worst in the book of Proverbs.

Ray Ortlund defines scoffers this way.

He identifies scoffers this way.

He says a scoffer is anyone who never accepts correction.

He thinks other people really need his opinions.

He's easily offended.

He's above other people.

And if someone seems to threaten his superiority, he scoffs, he mocks, he mouths off, he denigrates.

William McCain puts it this way, no man earns more universal detestation or deserves it more than he who wears a perpetual sneer, who is himself incapable of deep loyalty and reverence, and who supposes that it is his mission in life to promote the corrosion of the values by which individuals and society live.

He is the person with knowing wink and the clever phrase who has seen through the hollowness of everything.

I think after hearing these descriptions, it's easy to see that one, all of us have at least a little scoffer in us, right?

All of us are seeing through things when we feel belittled, making fun of other people to feel a little bit better about ourselves.

But I think we can also see that we as a society have largely embraced and glorified this attitude and have given it loads of money and platformed it on late night television.

I mean, this is a way a lot of us take in the news these days, just through comedy and sarcasm and constantly putting everything down, not taking anything seriously.

So a scoffer, that kind of person, that attitude, somebody that's marked by that kind of attitude, repays correction and abuse with injury.

That's like the telltale sign of a scoffer.

You try to correct me, you try to say where I'm wrong, I'm going to come right back at you hard, and you're going to receive abuse and injury from me.

But a wise man here humbly takes correction to heart and learns and grows from it and appreciates the person who was brave enough to confront it.

And the ability to humbly take correction also affects how each of them experience life in verses 11 and 12.

For by me, your days will be multiplied and years will be added to your life.

If you are wise, you are wise for yourself.

If you scoff, you alone will bear it.

First thing we see here in verse 11 is that there's an observation that living wisely will add days and years to your life.

I think there's a general and kind of a specific application of that verse.

Generally speaking,

as we've been seeing throughout the intro.

If you live within the grain of the universe that God created, like if you acknowledge the God who made the world around us and how He says that it works, generally speaking, you will be more successful and you will live longer, just as a general rule.

But more specifically, if you're a child of God, born again by the Spirit, redeemed by His Son's blood, you're going to live forever with Him.

And that adds a lot of days to your life.

Lady Wisdom's invitation here is to step into life, not just physical life, but eternal life, and experience it, but nobody can do that for you.

That's what we see in verse 12.

So the invitation is to step into life, like real, deep, rich life, but nobody can do that for you or on your behalf.

Verse 12, if you are wise, you are wise for yourself.

If you scoff, you alone will bear it.

Being around wise people doesn't make you wise any more than hanging around on a university campus makes you a graduate.

You got to accept the invitation.

You have to own it.

You have to pursue it.

And it takes effort.

Becoming wise takes effort and intentionality, even work.

And nobody can do that work for you.

Parents, unfortunately, we can't do it for our kids on their behalf.

You've got to accept the invitation.

You've got to do the work.

You have to pursue wisdom and forsake folly.

All right, so maybe you're here this morning and you're like, okay.

I was here for all the sermons.

I read through Proverbs 1 through 9.

I want to do the work.

I want to put in the effort.

I want to accept the invitation.

Where do I start?

So again, remember, Proverbs, primarily written to sons, to, in our context, believers here, inviting them in to wisdom and a full life.

How do we go?

Where's the start?

How do we go deeper into wisdom?

Well, Solomon is very clear here at the end of the intro.

It begins and in a sense ends with the fear and the knowledge of the Lord.

Look at verse 10.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

First, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Fear here is a sense of awe and respect.

It's different than belief.

Fear is different than belief.

I'm going to read a lot by Eugene Peterson here really quick because I think he explains, has a good handle on the fear of God and explains it really well.

He says,

What it's interested in is our response to him.

Will we let God be who he is, majestic and holy, vast and wondrous?

Or will we always be trying to whittle him down to size, confining him within boundaries we're comfortable with?

But then we aren't dealing with the God of creation, the God of the Exodus, the God of the resurrection.

Rather, we're dealing with a reproduction made in our own image, something that's attractive to the masses so it can be marketed to the masses.

To guard against all such blasphemous chumminess with the Almighty, the Bible talks of the fear of the Lord.

And it does so not to scare us, but to bring us to an awesome attention before the overwhelming grandeur of God.

In another place, Peterson talks about the word fear in particular.

He says the word fear is frequently used in a way that means more and other than simply being afraid.

Track with us very closely if you can.

But, and here's the thing, it includes all the emotions that accompany being afraid.

The disorientation, the not knowing what is going to happen to me,

the realization that there's far more here than I had any idea of, and that more and other is God.

Fear of God is the cultivated awareness of the more and other that the presence of God or the revelation of God introduces into our lives.

It's the realization that I'm not the center of my existence.

I'm not the sum total of what matters.

I don't know what will happen next.

Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

This kind of awe and respect for God and a humble view of ourselves and our limited perspective is the beginning of wisdom.

Recognizing that we're not remotely close to the same class of being as God, that he knows more, is more than we could ever be, is the beginning of wisdom.

And you can kind of see why, right?

Because we're beginning to see the universe and the world that God has made and who we are rightly.

But it's not just knowing what we don't know, all right?

So that's step one.

God's way bigger than I am.

He's way better than I am.

And there's a lot I don't know.

But it's not just knowing what we don't know.

Solomon moves us in a positive direction here when he also says the knowledge of the Holy One

is insight.

The knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

There's much to be known about God and much to be known of God.

Or in other words, there's much we can know with our heads about God and there's much we can experience with our hearts and that we are of God.

And that knowledge on all of its levels must be pursued.

That knowledge of God, knowing about him and knowing of him and experiencing him

must be pursued, pursued in studying and knowing creation and the world around us, knowing God through the world that he's made, pursued even more importantly in knowing him through his word and most pointedly in the gospel on the cross, the center of all of redemptive history.

And so just to be clear, right?

So just to be clear, we're kind of packaging this up.

We daily accept the invitation to wisdom's feast by adopting a humble and reverent posture before the Lord and working hard to receive him through the gospel and his word.

All right, if this is Solomon's so what, I feel like I gotta have a so what, right?

Explaining what we're to do with this decision that Solomon gives to us.

Solomon's calling us, and I think the only proper so what

is to take these three contrasts or two contrasts and a compound here and to adopt them daily, right?

To daily humble ourselves before the Lord and to grow in our knowledge of him.

The spiritual discipline of Bible reading and prayer are not ends in themselves, right?

It's not looking at ink on paper and muttering some words that God is interested in, right?

Rather, he calls us to intentionally understand

read the scriptures and pray, mindfully humbling ourselves in the Lord's presence and learning something new or reminding ourselves of who he is, right?

Who it is that we're reading about, who it is that we're talking to when we talk to him.

So meditate in prayer on what you know and allow your heart to embrace the Lord and his promises made to you.

This takes intentionality.

It's not

necessarily just gonna happen.

Sometimes by God's grace, he opens our eyes in a moment of reading and we see him, and it's always by God's grace that we're able to comprehend him, but he also works with our will, right?

And sometimes we have to sit down and intentionally meditate on God's word, almost, you know, intentionally being mindful of his presence and who he is.

So daily humble yourself before the Lord.

And then second, daily receive the correction that God brings your way

Often through others.

Maybe he's correcting you through his word, but also to others.

Remember how the wise man responds to correction and the scoffer.

And then lastly, as we're made aware of our sin, sometimes through that correction or through God's word, we're called to leave, live, and walk.

To repent of our sin, to call it what it is honestly.

and before the Lord and others to remember that that sin is not our identity, right?

That we live in a new identity in Christ and then to walk in that identity or to walk in new habits and patterns of holiness consistent with that identity.

It's only when we truly see God's heart and his character in the gospel with awe and knowledge that we can properly experience the true fear of the Lord and the life that he offers.

Charles Spurgeon puts that same principle this way, and we'll end with this.

The gate of mercy is opened, and over the door it is written, this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Between that word save and the next word sinners, there is no adjective.

It does not say penitent sinners, awakened sinners,
sensible sinners, grieving sinners, or alarmed sinners.

No, it only says sinners.

And I know this, that when I come, I come to Christ today, I dare not come as a conscious sinner or an awakened sinner, but I have to come still as a sinner with nothing in my hands.

We come just as we did the first time.

We come aware of our sin,
because God has revealed it to us.

And we come with humble and reverent fear of the Lord and all of his grace and mercy that he continues to show us day in and day out.

Not scoffing, not taking God's grace for granted, but the wise man receiving correction on a daily basis and recognizing our need for God's grace and mercy.

Let me pray and then we'll come to the table this morning.

Heavenly Father, thank you again for your grace and your mercy that's new even this morning.

Lord, we look back on that time, those of us that have put our faith and our hope in you.

Lord, we look back on that time that you opened our eyes to see your beauty and your majesty in the face of Jesus and what he's done for us on the cross today.

And Lord, we praise you and give you the glory for that.

And Lord, we look to, even today, as we reflect back on what Christ has done for us at the table together.

Lord, we look ahead, anticipating the grace that Christ has purchased for us to transform us.

and to make us and mold us into your image, to make us more like you and to sanctify us and to bring us into holiness.

Lord, would you give us a desire for that above all else?

Lord, would you give us a desire that moves us to action?

Would you give us a desire for that that trumps the desire for immediate gratification?

Lord, would you keep us out of woman folly's house, seeking cheap thrills, playing in the mud, as C.S.

Lewis puts it.

And Lord, would you keep our eyes fixed on the feast that you've prepared for us in Christ, even as we come to the table today.

Pray all this in Jesus' name, amen.

I'm gonna call the guys forward to help distribute the elements this morning.

And as we do, I just wanna read us one more passage out of 1 Timothy.