

Proverbs 2025 Pt. 2

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, February 2, 2025

COMMUNION

Today we will observe Communion. All who profess Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord are welcome to participate. The wafer you hold is representative of the Body of Christ, broken for us. The juice, of the shed Blood of Jesus. We do well to ready ourselves to receive. Please consider the following as you open your Communion packets.

If you study how the Early Church observed Communion, you will find it was always shared in a group setting. It was always something Christians did together in the context of community. The Lord's Supper served as a corporate act of worship, remembrance and commemoration. From its inception Communion was communal, as Christ instituted it during the Last Supper with His disciples. The bread and wine were first received by a group of believers, and this sentiment has continued for some two-thousand years. Communion offers more than a time to connect with Christ. It provides the ongoing opportunity to connect with one another. Consider:

- 1) Communion Provides Us the Opportunity to Recognize a Common Guilt
- 2) Communion Provides Us the Opportunity to Recognize a Common Savior
- 3) Communion Provides Us the Opportunity to Recognize a Common Lord
- 4) Communion Provides Us the Opportunity to Recognize Common Hope

KEY – In a world marred by strife and/or division, Communion functions as a binding element, fostering unity!

1 Corinthians 11:23–26 (NIV)

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us. Whether you are here in person or joining via the livestream you are most welcome. Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you like. We have much to cover in a rather short space of time.

SETTING THE STAGE

KEY – Last week we began a new multi-part series on the Book of Proverbs. This timeless yet timely work, penned by king Solomon, son of David, serves to impart wisdom (i.e., insight into righteous life and living) to all:

Q. Is this not made clear in the opening of the work?

Proverbs 1:1–6 (NIV)

1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

- 2 for gaining wisdom and instruction;
for understanding words of insight;
- 3 for receiving instruction in prudent behavior,
doing what is right and just and fair;
- 4 for giving prudence to those who are simple,
knowledge and discretion to the young—
- 5 let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance—
- 6 for understanding proverbs and parables,
the sayings and riddles of the wise.

Q. Was Solomon qualified to write a work on wisdom?

A. Yes. Scripture presents him as a man noted for wisdom!

1 Kings 4:29–34

29 God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. 30 Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. 31 He was wiser than anyone else, including Ethan the Ezrahite—wiser than Heman, Kalkol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. 32 He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. 33 He spoke about plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also spoke about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. 34 From all nations people came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.

Q. How did Solomon seek to impart wisdom in this work?

A1. Through the use of Proverb(s)

NOTE 1 – Most obviously, Solomon worked to convey wisdom through the use and utilization of proverbs. The Book of Proverbs is a compilation of individual proverbs, truisms or adages, meant to convey insight on a dizzying array of topics. Beginning with chapter 10, the reader is faced with a myriad of short and simple, yet profound statements, meant to convey some special lesson or truth (leading the readership unto wisdom).

A2. Through the Fatherly Tone

NOTE 2 – Beyond the use of the proverb, Solomon also utilized an impacting literary technique whereby he assumed a fatherly tone, addressing the reader as though he were a father speaking to his beloved children. Solomon is not trafficking in condescension herein or talking down to us. Rather, he is employing a technique meant to arrest our attention and/or soften our hearts, that we might listen and be inclined to receive the wisdom of the Lord given through him. This means of impartation is evident in the opening chapters (i.e., 1–7).

A3. Through Personification

NOTE 3 – Solomon used personification to offer instruction concerning the nature and operation of wisdom. Personification is a literary or poetic device in which something non-human is portrayed in a humanized way. Though this term is likely not part of your daily vocabulary, personification is something we are familiar with. For instance, have you ever seen this image before (**SLIDE** of Lady Justice)? Do we believe that Lady Justice is a literal woman righting the wrongs of society? No! Rather, she is the symbol and embodiment of what we expect of our judiciary (i.e., fairness and impartiality). We could also speak of Uncle Sam or Lady Liberty (**SLIDE**).

NOTE 4 – In the Book of Proverbs a number of abstract ideals and elements are presented via personification. Solomon communicates profound spiritual principles regarding wisdom and related topics through the presentation of recurring characters: **a)** Lady Folly; **b)** the Wise; **c)** the Simple; **d)** the Fool; and **e)** the Mocker. Of particular import today is the recurrent figure of Lady Wisdom. Those who would understand the nature and operation of wisdom for righteous life and living do well to consider this figure, which we shall to do today.

DELVING DEEPER

Q. Why is wisdom presented as a woman (i.e., in the feminine)?

A. Simply put, the underlying Hebrew word for “wisdom” in Old Testament literature is a feminine term. Hebrew, like many other languages (e.g., Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian, etc.) is a gendered language, wherein terms are presented in a masculine or feminine form. In Spanish, a guitar (*la guitarra*) is feminine, and a car (*el coche*) is masculine. Since the Hebrew for “wisdom” is feminine, in terms of language or grammar, it is little surprise that wisdom is characterized as a woman amidst the personifications presented by Solomon!

Q. What can we learn concerning the wisdom of God via Solomon’s “Lady Wisdom”?

A. This is the heart of our lesson today. I would like to posit three principles this morning:

POINT 1

KEY – Firstly, the presentation of Lady Wisdom teaches us of the availability and accessibility of God’s wisdom.

Proverbs 1:20–21a

20 Out in the open wisdom calls aloud,
 she raises her voice in the public square;
 21 on top of the wall she cries out,
 at the city gate she makes her speech . . .

- Q1. What are the activities of Lady Wisdom herein?**
Q2. Where is Lady Wisdom performing such activities?
Q3. To whom is Lady Wisdom communicating or calling?

Proverbs 8:1–5

1 Does not wisdom call out?
 Does not understanding raise her voice?
 2 At the highest point along the way,
 where the paths meet, she takes her stand;
 3 beside the gate leading into the city,
 at the entrance, she cries aloud:
 4 “To you, O people, I call out;
 I raise my voice to all mankind.
 5 You who are simple, gain prudence;
 you who are foolish, set your hearts on it.”

- Q1. What are the activities of Lady Wisdom herein?**
Q2. Where is Lady Wisdom performing such activities?
Q3. To whom is Lady Wisdom communicating or calling?

Proverbs 9:1–6

1 Wisdom has built her house;
 she has set up its seven pillars.
 2 She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine;
 she has also set her table.
 3 She has sent out her servants, and she calls
 from the highest point of the city,
 4 “Let all who are simple come to my house!”
 To those who have no sense she says,
 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 insight.”

- Q1. What are the activities of Lady Wisdom herein?**
Q2. Where is Lady Wisdom performing such activities?
Q3. To whom is Lady Wisdom communicating or calling?

Q. What does this personification reveal concerning the Lord and His wisdom?

A1. God is continually calling out to humanity to both receive and walk in His wisdom. He ongoingly extends the invitation for His creation to hear and heed His ways. His wisdom is no secret, but available and accessible!

A2. The call of God to wisdom is ubiquitous (i.e., truly universal in nature and scope). Yet do we hear and heed?

QUOTE – “[His] wisdom is said to cry with a loud voice, to intimate both God’s earnestness in inviting sinners to repentance, and their inexcusableness if they do not hear such loud cries.” –Poole

A3. God desires for the whole of humanity to receive wisdom. His invitation to come and receive is open to all.

QUOTE – “[Note] the open proclamation...to make it clear that the offer of wisdom is to the man in the street, and for the business of living, not to an élite [class] for the pursuit of scholarship.” –Kidner

QUOTE – “The important point is that wisdom is for ordinary people—she is not confined to the academic classroom or to sacred precincts of the temple. Nor is she high atop some mountain where only the hardest and most determined will find her. To the contrary, she wants to attract all and be accessible to all.” –Garrett

POINT 2

KEY – Secondly, the presentation of Lady Wisdom teaches us of the value and surpassing benefit of His wisdom.

Proverbs 3:13–18 (Emphasis Mine)

- 13 Blessed are those who find wisdom,
those who gain understanding,
14 for she is more profitable than silver
and yields better returns than gold.
15 She is more precious than rubies;
nothing you desire can compare with her.
16 Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honor.
17 Her ways are pleasant ways,
and all her paths are peace.
18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her;
those who hold her fast will be blessed.

QUOTE – “Wisdom [especially that which comes from God’s instruction and correction] is better than material gain. It imparts the kind of character and training that brings contentment and quality of life that money can’t provide.” –Guzik

QUOTE – “In principle, wisdom brings many benefits. Wise people live longer, enjoy great prosperity (riches) and esteem (honor). They live lives marked by pleasantness, by peace, and by happiness (happy are all who retain her).” –Guzik

Q. Is there more on this topic?

A. Yes! Let us consider this selection:

Proverbs 8:6–21, 32–35

- 6 “Listen, for I have trustworthy 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.
- 9 To the discerning all of them are right;
they are upright to those who have found knowledge.
- 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.
- 12 I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence;
I possess knowledge and discretion.
- 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 insight, I have power.
- 15 By me kings reign
and rulers issue decrees that are just;
- 16 by me princes govern,
and nobles—all who rule on earth.
- 17 I love those who love me,
and those who seek me find me.
- 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 a rich inheritance on those who love me
and making their treasuries full.
- 32 Now then, my children, listen to me;
blessed are those who keep my ways.
- 33 Listen to my instruction and be wise;
do not disregard it.
- 34 Blessed are those who listen to me,
watching daily at my doors,
waiting at my doorway.
- 35 For those who find me find life
and receive favor from the Lord.”

Q. What does this personification reveal concerning God and His wisdom?

A. Namely, that the wisdom He offers is incomparable in terms of utility and worth!

Q. Thus said, is it any surprise why the Book of Proverbs abounds with passages like this?

Proverbs 4:1–9

- 1 Listen, my sons, to a father’s instruction;
pay attention and gain understanding.
- 2 I give you sound learning,
so do not forsake my teaching.
- 3 For I too was a son to my father,
still tender, and cherished by my mother.
- 4 Then he taught me, and he said to me,
“Take hold of my words with all your heart;
keep my commands, and you will live.
- 5 Get wisdom, get understanding;
do not forget my words or turn away from them.
- 6 Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you;
love her, and she will watch over you.
- 7 The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom.
Though it cost all you have, get understanding.
- 8 Cherish her, and she will exalt you;
embrace her, and she will honor you.
- 9 She will give you a garland to grace your head
and present you with a glorious crown.”

POINT 3

KEY – Finally, the characterization of Lady Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs comes with corresponding warning.

Q. What warning(s) do we glean from Lady Wisdom and beyond?

A. Namely, we run the risk of real danger by refusing the wisdom of God.

Proverbs 8:32–36 (Emphasis Mine)

- 32 “Now then, my children, listen to me;
blessed are those who keep my ways.
- 33 Listen to my instruction and be wise;
do not disregard it.
- 34 Blessed are those who listen to me,
watching daily at my doors,
waiting at my doorway.
- 35 For those who find me find life
and receive favor from the Lord.
- 36 But those who fail to find me **harm themselves;**
all who hate me love death.”

Q. What harm might we bring on ourselves by rejecting wisdom divine?

Proverbs 8:22–31

22 “The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works,
before his deeds of old;
23 I was formed long ages ago,
at the very beginning, when the world came to be.
24 When there were no watery depths, I was given birth,
when there were no springs overflowing with water;
25 before the mountains were settled in place,
before the hills, I was given birth,
26 before he made the world or its fields
or any of the dust of the earth.
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.
30 Then I was constantly at his side [“like a master workman” or “architect” cf. NLT or ESV]
I was filled with delight day after day,
rejoicing always in his presence,
31 rejoicing in his whole world
and delighting in mankind.”

NOTE 1 – The author herein creatively elevates God’s wisdom by elevating her connection with creation itself. There is much in this text I would love to explore with you (e.g., underlying language elements fueling myriad English translations, its role in ancient theological debates, etc.), but I fear such would take away from the overarching point Solomon worked to make and the risk we run should we neglect, reject and dismiss wisdom!

NOTE 2 – Whatever can be said of God’s wisdom in this text, it both pre-dates and is foundational to creation. If the whole created order is ultimately founded upon the wisdom of God, than to go against His wisdom is to go against creation itself, violating the logic which forged and governs His universe. What harm and loss do we bring to ourselves by rebelling against His ways? How much pain we endure by continually kicking against the goad(s) He established in the forming of this world! Sin and rebellion always comes with a commensurate cost. Keep in mind that it is amid this context that the aforementioned text comes forth. Let us consider once again:

Proverbs 8:32–36 (Emphasis Mine)

32 “Now then, my children, listen to me;
blessed are those who keep my ways.
33 Listen to my instruction and be wise;
do not disregard it.
34 Blessed are those who listen to me,
watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway.
35 For those who find me find life
and receive favor from the Lord.
36 But those who fail to find me **harm themselves;**
all who hate me love death.”

NOTE 3 – There is one final passage I want to present regarding Lady Wisdom and the warning she brings. Note:

Proverbs 1:20–33

20 Out in the open wisdom calls aloud,
she raises her voice in the public square;
21 on top of the wall she cries out,
at the city gate she makes her speech:

22 “How long will you who are simple love your simple ways?
How long will mockers delight in mockery
and fools hate knowledge?
23 Repent at my rebuke!
Then I will pour out my thoughts to you,
I will make known to you my teachings.
24 But since you refuse to listen when I call
and no one pays attention when I stretch out my hand,
25 since you disregard all my advice
and do not accept my rebuke,
26 I in turn will laugh when disaster strikes you;
I will mock when calamity overtakes you—
27 when calamity overtakes you like a storm,
when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind,
when distress and trouble overwhelm you.
28 Then they will call to me but I will not answer;
they will look for me but will not find me,
29 since they hated knowledge
and did not choose to fear the Lord.
30 Since they would not accept my advice
and spurned my rebuke,
31 they will eat the fruit of their ways
and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.
32 For the waywardness of the simple will kill them,
and the complacency of fools will destroy them;
33 but whoever listens to me will live in safety
and be at ease, without fear of harm.”

NOTE 4 – This passage touches upon a well-established principle that permeates the Old and New Testament. God is slow to anger (Exod. 34:6; Num. 14:8; Psa. 103:8; Psa. 145:8, Nah. 1:3), yet not impossible to anger. Persist long enough in a wayward direction, run headlong long-enough in rebellion, ongoingly resist and reject His call to repent, and there comes a point when He allows you to experience righteous judgment, undeterred!

Isaiah 55:6 (Emphasis Mine)

6 **Seek** the Lord **while he may be found**;
call on him **while he is near**.

Galatians 6:7 (Emphasis Mine)

7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man **reaps** what he **sows**.

SUMMATIONS

NOTE 1 – We glean much from Lady Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs. Let us have ears to hear His Word today:

- God has made His wisdom known: it is available and accessible
- His wisdom is of supreme worth and/or benefit; let us pursue wisdom
- There is great danger and real risk in rebelling against or rejecting His ways

NOTE 2 – Next week we will continue our study of the recurring personifications within the Book of Proverbs. For HW I would ask you to read the opening chapters again (1–9), looking for Lady Folly (Adulterous Woman). What you will see is the antithesis of all we discussed today! May the Lord bless you as you consider Scripture!

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – I would call you to worship God through your giving. Please give online and/or in person.

NOTE 2 – Check out the website for upcoming events and more (www.NewLifeBarre.org).

NOTE 3 – Women’s Ministry on February 11; our Men’s Ministry on February 15.

2 Corinthians 13:14 (NIV)

14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.