

Proverbs 2025 Pt. 3

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, February 23, 2025

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 – We are in the midst of a multi-segment series on the Book of Proverbs. This timeless and timely work, penned by king Solomon, son of David, serves to impart wisdom (i.e., insight into righteous life and living) unto all who would hear (Prov. 1:1–6). How blessed we are to gain from the God-given wisdom of Solomon, etc.

Q. How did Solomon seek to impart wisdom in his 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. Recently we spent the whole of our time considering Lady Wisdom in the opening chapters of Proverbs (1–9). Lady Wisdom serves as the embodiment of God’s ways and His desire for us to walk in them. She is instructive:

Q. What did we discover re: the wisdom of God via Lady Wisdom?

A1. Availability. His wisdom is ubiquitous and He desires for all to possess it.

A2. Value. The wisdom that He offers is of exceeding value and should be sought.

A3. Warning. Those who reject God’s wisdom experience needless calamity or pain.

NOTE 4 – Please review the sermons from recent days and the corresponding notes online at NewLifeBarre.org.

TRANSITIONS

NOTE 1 – This morning I want to advance our series by considering a recurring figure who serves as the literary antithesis to Lady Wisdom in the opening chapters of the Book of Proverbs (1–9). I refer to a character named Lady Folly or the Adulterous Woman. Some translations call her the Forbidden Woman or the Strange Woman!

NOTE 2 – In full disclosure, there is legitimate debate as to whether Lady Folly and the Adulterous Woman are two figures or one. For the purposes of this series I will treat them synonymously, for both lead to the same end (i.e., shame, death and judgment) and both serve as a counterpoint to Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 1–9.

Q. What does Lady Folly represent?

A. She is the embodiment of sinfulness and the deceitfulness of temptation. She represents those forces—internal and external forces—that would cause us to forsake wisdom for wickedness (i.e., world, flesh and devil)!

KEY – Similar to our study last week, we will consider an array of texts through the filter of three points. Note:

POINT 1

KEY – Firstly, the presentation of the Adulterous Woman reveals both the availability and accessibility of folly.

Proverbs 9:13–17 (NIV) (Emphasis Mine)

13 Folly is an unruly woman;
 she is simple and knows nothing.
 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 to my house!”
 To those who have no sense she says,
 17 “Stolen water is sweet;
 food eaten in secret is delicious!”

NOTE 1 – We see that Lady Folly, representative of evil and of forces that would cause us to abandon wisdom, has positioned herself in such a way to engage the entirety of humanity. She is ubiquitous, alluring and inviting. Similar to Lady Wisdom, Folly seeks to convert the masses to her cause, that they might partake of her way(s)!

Proverbs 7:6–12 (Emphasis Mine)

6 At the window of my house
I looked down through the lattice.

7 I saw among the simple,
I noticed among the young men,
a youth who had no sense.

8 He was going down the street near **her** corner,
walking along in the direction of **her** house

9 at twilight, as the day was fading,
as the dark of night set in.

10 Then out came a woman to meet him,
dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent.

11 (She is unruly and defiant,
her feet never stay at home;

12 now in the **street**, now in the **squares**,
at **every corner** she **lurks**.)

NOTE 2 – Note again that Folly has positioned herself in such a way to engage all who pass by. Not only does she possess a place of her own (i.e., and how many dens of evil exist in our world), but she is ever lurking “in the street . . . in the squares . . . [or] at every corner.” We see that waywardness has a predatory capacity! You do not have to go far to find Folly for she is ever-seeking you! These words touch on a number of passages:

Genesis 4:6–7 (Emphasis Mine) [External]

6 Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, **sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you**, but you must rule over it.”

1 Peter 5:8 [External]

8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Jeremiah 17:9 [Internal]

9 The heart is deceitful above all things
and beyond cure.
Who can understand it?

Proverbs 4:23 [Internal]

23 Above all else, guard your heart,
for everything you do flows from it.

POINT 2

KEY – Secondly, the presentation of Lady Folly reveals the operation and sinister seduction of evil. Let us note:

Proverbs 9:13–18

- 13 Folly is an unruly [lit. “clamorous” or “noisy”] woman;
 she is simple and knows nothing.
 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 to my house!”
 To those who have no sense she says,
 17 “Stolen water is sweet;
 food eaten in secret is delicious!”

Q. What does “clamorous” mean?

A. It means that Lady Folly “speaks loudly, that she may be heard, and vehemently, that persons might be moved by her persuasions.” –Poole

Q. What is the message of Lady Folly?

Proverbs 9:16–17 (Emphasis Mine)

- 16 “Let all who are simple come to my house!”
 To those who have no sense she **says**,
 17 “Stolen water is sweet;
 food eaten in secret is delicious!”

QUOTE – “This is the message of folly, explaining how good it is to be bad. Things gained through transgression are more sweet and pleasant than what may be rightfully obtained.” –Guzik

QUOTE – “I suppose this to be a proverbial mode of expression, importing that illicit pleasures are sweeter than those which are legal. The meaning is easy to be discerned; and the conduct of multitudes shows that they are ruled by this adage. On it are built all the adulterous intercourses in the land.” –Clarke

ILL – “When Augustine describes how he stole fruit from the pear tree, he says that he did not do it because he was hungry, as he threw away most of the fruit, but for the mere pleasure of sin as sin.” –Bridges

Proverbs 5:1–3 (Emphasis Mine)

- 1 My son, pay attention to my wisdom,
 turn your ear to my words of insight,
 2 that you may maintain discretion
 and your lips may preserve knowledge.
 3 For the **lips** of the adulterous woman **drip honey**,
 and her **speech is smoother than oil** . . .

Q. What can we learn concerning Lady Folly herein?

A. There is something seductive and captivating about sin!

QUOTE – “Honey is sweet and oil is pleasant, and these represent the temptations of immorality.” –Guzik

Q. Why do we call temptation, temptation?

A. Because sinful behavior and evil are tempting!

Proverbs 7:6–21

6 At the window of my house
I looked down through the lattice.
7 I saw among the simple,
I noticed among the young men,
a youth who had no sense.
8 He was going down the street near her corner,
walking along in the direction of her house
9 at twilight, as the day was fading,
as the dark of night set in.

10 Then out came a woman to meet him,
dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent.
11 (She is unruly and defiant,
her feet never stay at home;
12 now in the street, now in the squares,
at every corner she lurks.)
13 She took hold of him and kissed him
and with a brazen face she said:
14 “Today I fulfilled my vows,
and I have food from my fellowship offering at home.
15 So I came out to meet you;
I looked for you and have found you!
16 I have covered my bed
with colored linens from Egypt.
17 I have perfumed my bed
with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.
18 Come, let’s drink deeply of love till morning;
let’s enjoy ourselves with love!
19 My husband is not at home;
he has gone on a long journey.
20 He took his purse filled with money
and will not be home till full moon.”
21 With persuasive words she led him astray;
she seduced him with her smooth talk.

NOTE – These passages cumulatively work to demonstrate the nature of evil and the way it calls us unto sin. There are real “internal and external” forces working against us, calling us to abandon wisdom for wickedness. However, the passing pleasures of sinfulness always come at too high a cost. There is a warning we must note:

POINT 3

KEY – The presentation of Folly always presents the corresponding cost of heeding her invitation (i.e., danger).

Proverbs 2:16–19

- 16 Wisdom will save you also from the adulterous woman,
 from the wayward woman with her seductive words,
 17 who has left the partner of her youth
 and ignored the covenant she made before God.
 18 Surely her house leads down to death
 and her paths to the spirits of the dead.
 19 None who go to her return
 or attain the paths of life.

Proverbs 9:13–18

- 13 Folly is an unruly woman;
 she is simple and knows nothing.
 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 to my house!”
 To those who have no sense she says,
 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 deep in the realm of the dead.

Q. Are not such precepts vividly presented in Proverbs 5 and 7?

Proverbs 5:1–6

- 1 My son, pay attention to my wisdom,
 turn your ear to my words of insight,
 2 that you may maintain discretion
 and your lips may preserve knowledge.
 3 For the lips of the adulterous woman drip honey,
 and her speech is smoother than oil;
 4 but in the end she is bitter as gall,
 sharp as a double-edged sword.
 5 Her feet go down to death;
 her steps lead straight to the grave.

Proverbs 5:7–14, 22–23

7 Now then, my sons, listen to me;
do not turn aside from what I say.
8 Keep to a path far from her,
do not go near the door of her house,
9 lest you lose your honor to others
and your dignity to one who is cruel,
10 lest strangers feast on your wealth
and your toil enrich the house of another.
11 At the end of your life you will groan,
when your flesh and body are spent.
12 You will say, "How I hated discipline!
How my heart spurned correction!
13 I would not obey my teachers
or turn my ear to my instructors.
14 And I was soon in serious trouble
in the assembly of God's people."

22 The evil deeds of the wicked ensnare them;
the cords of their sins hold them fast.
23 For lack of discipline they will die,
led astray by their own great folly.

Proverbs 7 [re: the Simple Youth and Lady Folly]

21 With persuasive words she led him astray;
she seduced him with her smooth talk.
22 All at once he followed her
like an ox going to the slaughter,
like a deer stepping into a noose
23 till an arrow pierces his liver,
like a bird darting into a snare,
little knowing it will cost him his life.
24 Now then, my sons, listen to me;
pay attention to what I say.
25 Do not let your heart turn to her ways
or stray into her paths.
26 Many are the victims she has brought down;
her slain are a mighty throng.
27 Her house is a highway to the grave,
leading down to the chambers of death.

Q. What do we see in these passages but this reality?

Romans 3:23 (Emphasis Mine)

23 . . . the wages of sin is **death**

NOTE – These passages are meant to serve as a warning, that we might think past temptation to consequence:

James 1:13–15 (Emphasis Mine)

13 When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to **death**.

SUMMATIONS

Q. What can we learn from Lady Folly?

A1. Evil is ubiquitous. You do not have to travel far to find waywardness in this world. It is ever-looking for you.

A2. Evil is seductive. Internal and external forces (world, flesh and devil) are trying to allure you unto sinfulness.

A3. Evil is costly. The wage(s) of sin is death. The rejection of God’s wisdom always comes with too-high a cost.

KEY – Let us reject evil and embrace wisdom. It is ubiquitous, calling out to all who would hear, and of benefit!

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 4 – Chili & Chowder Event post-church on March 2 (Heritage Bible Chapel).

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.