

Proverbs 9 "God's Kind of Woman" **

Main Idea: What kind of woman pleases God? On this Mother's Day, we'll look at Proverbs 9 for the answer. It's here we meet two kinds of women and discover two appropriate responses.

I. Give honor to Lady Wisdom (1-12).

A. Lady Wisdom gives us God-honoring action (1-3).

B. Lady Wisdom gives us a God-honoring invitation (4-6).

1. She offers us the good life.
2. She urges us to think rightly and live rightly.

C. Lady Wisdom gives us a God-honoring explanation (7-12).

1. She explains the options (7-9).
2. She explains the importance of fearing the Lord (10).
3. She explains the benefits of living under God's authority (11-12).

II. Beware of Lady Folly (13-18).

A. Lady Folly gives us plenty of talk, but little action (13-14).

B. Lady Folly gives us a self-promoting invitation (15-16).

1. She too offers the good life.
2. She appeals to our feelings.

C. Lady Folly gives us a God-defying explanation (17-18).

1. She says we should be our own authority.
2. She says we can make our own rules in life.
3. She doesn't tell us the whole story.

Application: In light of what we have learned...

1. We need Lady Wisdom today.
2. We need to recognize and resist Lady Folly today.
3. We need to thank God for grace today.

Mother's Day is a great day for various reasons. For starters, it gives us the opportunity to affirm our appreciation for mothers, for our own mothers and for the mothers in this church family. Moms, we

appreciate you! Then again, Mother's Day is a great day to do some teaching on the subject of parenting, and we've done that in previous years. But this morning, I'd like to do something else. I'd like to address an important question...

What kind of mother pleases God, and for that matter, what kind of mother *doesn't*? You realize, of course, that not all mothers please God. Remember Athaliah? When her son, King Ahaziah, died, she proceeded to kill all her grandchildren to secure the throne for herself (2 Kings 11; 2 Chr 22). Gomer was certainly far from an ideal mom. Though married to a godly man named Hosea, she engaged in prostitution, bore children (probably to men not her husband), and lived a wild life, until the Lord humbled her and her faithful husband rescued and restored her. And who could forget Jezebel? This queen mother not only delighted in sin, but she aggressively promoted Baal worship and sought to eliminate righteousness from Israel (see 1 Kings 21 for the story of her murder of Naboth).

So not all mothers please God. But by God's enabling grace, a mother can please God. And if she does, what will she look like? I appreciate the fact that the Bible not only tells us what to do, but also gives us pictures of what pleasing God looks like in real life. That's what we're going to consider in the next few moments, a passage of Scripture that shows us God's kind of woman.

On this Mother's Day, we're going to look at Proverbs 9. It's here we meet two kinds of women, Lady Wisdom (verses 1-12) and Lady Folly (verses 13-18). They both have a house, and they both are calling to us from their houses, and they both want us to join them. They both have a message for us about what matters in life, and quite frankly, their messages are conflicting. These two women are as different as day and night, and yet both call for your attention and both promise you life.

That means you've got a choice to make this morning, just like you will tomorrow morning, and the next. You're going to have to do something with the invitations that Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly are extending to you. You can't go to both parties. It'll be one or the other. And please realize that only one is really a party. The other is a banquet in a graveyard.

Who are you going to listen to? That's a huge question these days, for indeed, Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly are constantly calling out to us with their rival messages. We heard an example three weeks ago when Miss California, Carrie Prejean, responded to a question posed by one of the judges, Perez Hilton, during her competition interview.

Hilton asked: "Vermont recently became the fourth state to legalise same-sex marriage. Do you think every state should follow suit. Why or why not?"

Prejean responded, "Well, I think it's great that Americans are able to choose one or the other. We live in a land where you can choose same-sex marriage or opposite marriage And you know what, in my country, in my family, I think that I believe that a marriage should be between a man and a woman. No offence to anybody out there, but that's how I was raised and that's how I think it should be - between a man and a woman. Thank you very much."

Within minutes the judge and others blasted the contestant for "having half a brain." Most feel her response cost her the crown.[1](#)

So yes, you're going to have to decide what voice to listen to today. By the way, who needs this message? Our young girls do. Gals, you need to know what God wants you to become as you mature. Our young men do. Fellows, you're about to see the kind of lady you should seek as you consider marriage. Our mothers do. Ladies, be encouraged if you resemble Lady Wisdom and give God the glory. Church family, we all need this message, for we all need to hold in high esteem God's kind of woman (and man, for that matter) and urge the person who's not to repent and change.

I. Give honor to Lady Wisdom (1-12).

Before we examine the details of the text, I need to say a word about the *context*. Proverbs is wisdom literature. The Lord originally gave this book to His chosen people, the Israelites, to show them in practical terms how to live in relationship with Him. The book doesn't show us how to enter a relationship with God—it assumes that—but rather how to be wise in living for God.

That means if you are not a child of God, please don't assume you can become one by doing the things you are about to learn. You can't. Becoming a child of God isn't a reward for good deeds we might do (such as being wise in life). It is the gift of God, a gift which God gives us the moment we turn to Him in repentance and place our faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. God's salvation is by grace, not merit.

But if you know Jesus Christ, you're ready for the practical instruction of Proverbs. The first nine chapters of Proverbs provide, in essence, a very long introduction to Solomon's actual proverbs which begin in chapter ten.^[2] In chapters 1-9 Solomon emphasizes the importance of wisdom, from a variety of perspectives, and then in chapters ten and following, he shows what wisdom looks like in a host of real life scenarios.

This nine chapter introduction concludes in chapter nine with two appeals, one by wisdom and the other by folly, or as I've suggested, one by Lady Wisdom and the other by Lady Folly, for Solomon personifies wisdom and folly as women. These two women have actually been calling to us throughout the first eight chapters of Proverbs, Lady Wisdom in chapters 2-4 and Lady Folly in chapters 5-7, and Lady Wisdom again in chapter 8.

You're going to see some similarities between these two women in chapter nine. They both have a house (verses 1 and 14). They both extend an invitation to a banquet (verses 5 and 17). They both make their appeals to the same audience, to "the simple" (verses 4 and 16). But that's where the similarities end, as we'll see shortly.

Let's take a closer look at Lady Wisdom. She gives us three God-honoring things.

A. Lady Wisdom gives us God-honoring action (1-3). "Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. She has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city."

Who is this woman? It's called *personification*. Solomon doesn't have a particular woman in mind. He is simply giving life to the abstract trait of wisdom which is the theme of Proverbs. He began the book with this purpose statement in Proverbs 1:1-2, "The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight."

What's wisdom? By definition, wisdom (Heb. *khokmah*) is "the capacity to understand and so have skill in living, implying adherence to a set standard (Dt 4:6; 1Ki 5:9)."^[3] That's what wisdom *is*. Here's what wisdom *does*. Wisdom shows up in a life of God-honoring action.

Our text says that wisdom has built her house. Back in 8:29 Solomon used the analogy of building a house to refer to the world (see also Job 38:6). That's what wisdom has done, built a house. And this house has seven pillars. There's no consensus among Bible scholars about these "seven pillars." One suggestion is this is a contrast to popular pagan shrines of the day that had seven pillars. Kidner says, "There may be a cosmic allusion, to the seven days of creation or to the sun, moon and five known planets, and so to the structure of the universe."^[4] The *NIV Study Bible* says that the number "seven" may simply refer to the seven major aspects of wisdom.

The point is that Lady Wisdom is a woman of action. She has *built* her house. She has *hewn* its pillars. She has *prepared* her meat, *mixed* her wine, *set* her table, and *sent* out her maids. Those things don't just happen. Those actions require intentionality and effort. As does this action. Verse 3 says that Lady Wisdom *calls*, and the reason she calls is because she's got something we need and she's ready to give it to us.

B. Lady Wisdom gives us a God-honoring invitation (4-6). Here it is: "Let all who are simple

come in here!' she says to those who lack judgment. 'Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding.'

The word picture describes a banquet. Lady Wisdom lays out her sumptuous spread, her food and mixed wine^[5] adorning the table. We might say that in her invitation...

1. *She offers us the good life.* Come, eat and drink what I've prepared, wisdom says. The food and drink she offers refers to the truth for living she's about to put on the table in Proverbs 10-31.

And notice her guest list. She doesn't invite the movers and shakers of the world to her party, but *the simple*, for they're the ones who need her. The term "simple" (Heb. *pathaw*) means "to be open and spacious" (there's a lot of empty space in their brains) and refers to folks who are open-minded (as opposed to being discerning, they take everything in), naive, and gullible. As Kidner observes, "the guests' deficiency [is] their only qualification."^[6]

This is quite a woman. This party isn't for her benefit as much as for others. She offers the good life to the simple. But what is the good life? Yes, Lady Wisdom invites the simple but listen to what she tells them. *Leave your simple ways and you will live.* In other words, the effect Lady Wisdom intends her banquet to have on the simple is that they stop being simple. We might say...

2. *She urges us to think rightly and live rightly.* When you come to Lady Wisdom, you come with nothing, with an open space in your cranium. But you don't leave that way. She fills it up. She teaches you to stop being blindly open-minded, start filling your mind with truth, and then calls you to *walk in the way of understanding.*

My friend, hear this well. Lady Wisdom is not a very tolerant woman. She doesn't tolerate foolish thinking or foolish living. She's gracious, yes, and she'll work with anybody who'll come to her, but she won't let them stay the way they are.

Did you have a mother like that? I'm thankful I did. We need more moms like Lady Wisdom these days, women who balance grace and truth, patience and precept, ladies who open their arms to the simple but don't let them stay simple.

We hear a similar invitation in Isaiah 55:1-2, "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare."

Jesus used a similar analogy in His invitation in John 6:51, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

We've considered Lady Wisdom's God-honoring action and invitation. Thirdly...

C. Lady Wisdom gives us a God-honoring explanation (7-12). Moms and dads, there's a place for "Do it because I said so" in parenting, for children need to learn that they are *under authority*. Nevertheless, whenever possible we need to do what Lady Wisdom did here. We should give God-honoring explanations for our expectations. If we're to tell our simple-minded kids to stop being simple-minded, we'd better show them why and how. Should we be telling our kids to turn off the television and computer games at times, and should we be insisting that they incorporate mind-engaging, God-honoring activities into their routine? Sure, but we also need to help them understand why and how. Like Lady Wisdom did in verses 7-12.

There's some debate as to how verses 7-12 relate to Lady Wisdom's appeal that precedes it and Lady Folly's appeal that follows it. Some scholars treat the section as though it's out of place. I agree with the NIV which brackets verses 7-12 in quotation marks, indicating that Lady Wisdom is continuing to speak to us. She's just given her invitation, and now she supports it with a threefold explanation.

1. *She explains the options (7-9).* “Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult; whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse. Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you. Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.”

What’s the point of those verses? In essence, it’s quite simple. Lady Wisdom is putting the options before us. There are two kinds of people in this world. There are the wicked and there are the righteous. The wicked resist correction and that’s because they don’t think they need it. In fact, they even attack the person who tries to correct them because in their proud eyes, they’re just fine. If there’s a problem, it’s certainly not there’s. They are self-sufficient and self-glorifying.

And then there are the righteous. They don’t act like they’ve arrived. To the contrary, they know they need instruction and even correction at times, and they welcome it.

Which kind of person are you? That’s the question Lady Wisdom wants us to ponder. Are you a teachable learner or a self-reliant, know-it-all? Those are the options.

2. *She explains the importance of fearing the Lord (10).* “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” That’s essentially a restatement of the theme verse of the book that Solomon gave back in 1:7. If you want to be wise in life, there’s nothing more important than fearing the Lord because that’s where wisdom begins. You can’t get wisdom merely by reading a book, for wisdom isn’t merely an academic pursuit. It’s a life lived in relation with and obedience to a Person, namely the Person who has created you and provided redemption for you.

3. *She explains the benefits of living under God’s authority (11-12).* “For through me your days will be many, and years will be added to your life. If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer.”

Did you catch the benefits? *Your days will be many. Years will be added to your life.* In other words, the good life will be yours, says Lady Wisdom. It will be yours, yet to experience it you must dine at my table and do as I instruct. You must fear the Lord and chose to live in submission to His authority—and that’s what Proverbs shows us how to do, with a host of commands that address real life issues like friendships, work, money, sex, parenting, and alcohol. Do what I say, says Lady Wisdom, and my blessings will be yours.^[7]

Let’s pause to take inventory. How have you been responding to Lady Wisdom’s appeal? She’s been urging you to leave your simple ways and walk in the way of understanding. She’s been calling you to cultivate the fear of the Lord and get serious about the knowledge of the Holy One. She’s been insisting that the key to the good life is to deny yourself and live in joyful submission to your Creator’s authority.

Allow me to personalize this. For some of you Lady Wisdom has spoken literally through a lady in your life, your own mother. Some of you have taken that counsel to heart, and her heart rejoices. But sadly, some of you persist in shutting your ears to that dear woman. You’re breaking her heart and destroying your life. Oh, you don’t see it that way. You’ve convinced yourself that she overstated the case and that you’re okay. Quite frankly, one of the main reasons you persist in your sin-loving rebellion is because you’ve been listening to another woman. It’s true. There’s another lady in your life whose voice is calling for your attention. We meet her in the second scene of Proverbs 9.

II. Beware of Lady Folly (13-18).

Solomon introduces us to her in verse 13, “The woman Folly is loud; she is undisciplined and without knowledge.” We might call her “Ms. Stupidity” for by definition, the term *folly* (Heb. *keseelooth*) means “stupidity, insolence, i.e., the state of being in complete lack of understanding, implying rebellion (Pr 9:13+).”^[8]

David Jeremiah tells the story of little Petunia who had a stomachache and was telling her mother how

badly she felt. Her mother replied, "Well honey, that's because your tummy is empty." That evening at church the pastor remarked that he had a splitting headache. Petunia leaned over and said to her mother, "That's because his head is empty, he'd feel better if he had something in it."^[9]

That's a good description of Lady Folly. Her head is empty and she'd feel better if she had something in it. Yet she's sly. At first glance she resembles Lady Wisdom, intentionally so. She too has a house. She too offers a meal of sorts. She too extends an invitation—and to the same audience, to "the simple." She too offers counsel to those who will listen. Lady Folly is an imitator. She does what Lady Wisdom does, to a point. As Allen Ross observes, "She often imitates wisdom so that only the cautious and discerning will make the right choice."^[10]

But here's where the similarities stop. Let me put the contrast before you. Remember point one regarding Lady Wisdom? Lady Wisdom gives us God-honoring action—she has built her house, prepared her meal, sent out her invitations; in other words, she's a worker. Not so Lady Folly.

A. Lady Folly gives us plenty of talk, but little action (13-14). "The woman Folly is loud; she is undisciplined and without knowledge. She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city..."

In contrast to the God-honoring action of Lady Wisdom, Lady Folly is *loud*, a term that speaks of being riotous. She's always in turmoil and stirring up turmoil. One person described her as being "restless and rootless."^[11]

She is also *undisciplined*, indicating she takes a sense-driven, feeling-approach to life. The ESV uses the term "seductive." And she is *without knowledge*—again, she doesn't need to know anything because, for starters, she merely does what she feels like doing, and furthermore, she gets what she wants the same way; her persuasion is sensual rather than factual.

Here's a second contrast. Whereas Lady Wisdom gives us a God-honoring invitation...

B. Lady Folly gives us a self-promoting invitation (15-16). Verse 14 told us that she sits at the door of her house. Verse 15 tells us what she's doing there, for she's "calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way." Lady Wisdom went looking for her guests, sending her maids to find them. Not Lady Folly. She just sits there, self-absorbed and self-focused, and as she sits there she calls the ones who come her way.

And they come. Sadly, they come. And when they do, verse 16 tells us her tactic, "'Let all who are simple come in here!' she says to those who lack judgment." She goes after the simple, the folks who lack judgment. Like Lady Wisdom...

1. *She too offers the good life.* But she doesn't base her appeal on truth or righteousness. She could care less what's right, and she goes after the person who shares her disdain for what's true and right.

2. *She appeals to our feelings.* And for folks who lack judgment and live by their feelings, she's a master persuader.

If you want to see Lady Folly in action, turn back to Proverbs 7. Notice who we meet in verses 6-9, "At the window of my house I looked out through the lattice. I saw among the **simple**, I noticed among the young men, a youth who **lacked judgment**. He was going down the street near her corner, walking along in the direction of her house at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in."

There's her prey, the simple-minded, feeling-oriented man who lacks judgment. Where's he going? To her house. And like a boa she slides out to meet him in verses 10-20: "Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent. (She is loud and defiant, her feet never stay at home; now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner she lurks.) She took hold of him and kissed him and with a brazen face she said: 'I have fellowship offerings at home; today I fulfilled my vows. So I came out

to meet you; I looked for you and have found you! I have covered my bed with colored linens from Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. Come, let's drink deep of love till morning; let's enjoy ourselves with love! My husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey. He took his purse filled with money and will not be home till full moon."

Did you catch what the adulteress did in verses 14-20? She knows this is a good Bible-believing boy that's come to her house. He knows that sexual sin is wrong. So she dresses up the sin—she talks about her fellowship offerings and vows to God. Then she relabels it—this isn't sin; this is *love*. Let's enjoy ourselves with love! And I'm not being unfaithful to my husband—he's gone on a business trip. Implication? He thinks more of his money and his work than he does me anyway. I need you.

The adulteress in Proverbs 7 does the same thing that Lady Folly does in Proverbs 9:17-18.

C. Lady Folly gives us a God-defying explanation (17-18). She justifies her sin. She has to or no one would follow her. Lady Wisdom worked hard to prepare her meal. Lady Folly didn't. She stole her food. How'd she justify that? Listen to her in verse 17, "Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!"

That's the way our depraved desires work, and Lady Folly knows it. The prospect of getting something for nothing is enticing. And the thought of getting away with something that deserves a penalty is even more enticing to our wicked hearts.

The image takes us back to Proverbs 5. There we read that drinking water from your own well is likened to enjoying the beauty of sexual intimacy within the marriage bond. Drink your own water, says Lady Wisdom, rejoice with the wife of your youth (5:18).

That's outdated, says Lady Folly. Stolen water is a whole lot sweeter, she insists. "Eve had to be convinced that the sweetness would survive the stealing," observes Derek Kidner. "We have fallen far enough to be persuaded that it depends on it."^[12]

There's the God-defying explanation of Lady Folly, my friend. Know it well, for you'll hear it again and again as you navigate through this world.

1. *She says we should be our own authority.* "Who cares what some dusty, old book says? It's your life, isn't it?" Furthermore...

2. *She says we can make our own rules in life.* "Who says stolen water is bitter? I say it's sweet!" According to Lady Folly, it doesn't matter if something is *right*, only if it's right for me. "If it feels right, why not do it? God made your feelings, didn't He? It must be right. He won't care." Know this about Lady Folly...

3. *She doesn't tell us the whole story.* The water is sweet, says Lady Folly. The food is delicious, she insists. But there's this one little detail she leaves out, namely, "Eat this meal and it will kill you." As verse 18 concludes, "But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of the grave."

Or as Allen Ross assesses, "Many 'eat' on earth what they 'digest' in hell."^[13]

Or to borrow Jesus' words in Matthew 7:13, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it."

That's the way sin works, beloved. To finish the story in Proverbs 7, "With persuasive words she led him astray; she seduced him with her smooth talk. All at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a noose till an arrow pierces his liver, like a bird darting into a snare, little knowing it will cost him his life (21-23)."

We've heard two appeals this morning. We've heard from Lady Wisdom and from Lady Folly. Both offer us abundant life, but only one is telling the truth. You'd think the response would be a no-brainer.

Who in their right mind would say no to wisdom and yes to a banquet in the grave?

But, you see, therein lies our problem. We're not in our right mind. We enter the world at birth with depraved minds. We can hear wisdom's appeal, but we need more than an appeal. That's because we are sinners who naturally resist wisdom's appeal, miss the mark, and go our own way, even though our own way leads to destruction.

Yes, this is our problem, beloved. Lady Wisdom's appeal isn't enough. We need more than the appeal to live a wise life, for sinners spurn that appeal.

Thankfully, in His grace, God solved our predicament. How? We find God's solution for our dilemma explained in 1 Corinthians 1:30 which states, "Christ Jesus...has become for us wisdom from God."

The fact is, Lady Wisdom points us to a person, Jesus Christ. We've all missed the mark, but Christ became for us wisdom from God. God's wisdom isn't merely a precept on a page, but ultimately is the *person* who kept those precepts, the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth and obeyed God's standard perfectly. He personified wisdom, but He didn't just personify it. He did it *for us*. Christ has become for us *wisdom from God*.

That's yet another of the hundreds of reasons why you and I need Christ. If you will believe in Him, accept the sacrifice He made on the cross to cover your sins, and believe that God raised Him from the dead on the third day, God will save you. God will give you His Son's wisdom so that you can heed Lady Wisdom's call, so that you can live the kind of life that pleases Him.

Application: In light of what we have learned...we need three things.

1. *We need Lady Wisdom today.* Here's what I mean. We need women (men, too, but on this Mother's Day especially women) who will do what we've seen Lady Wisdom do in Proverbs 9. We need women who will invest their lives in helping the simple leave their simple ways. We need women who will do that in their homes and in this church. We need Lady Wisdom to stand up and be accounted for.

2. *We need to recognize and resist Lady Folly today.* We need to do that in our choice of entertainment, in our choice of clothing styles, in our dating standards, in the way we relate to the opposite sex at work, and in every facet of life. She's calling to us, and we need to flee from her.

3. *We need to thank God for grace today.* If you had a godly mother, thank God for His gracious gift. If you didn't, please know that His grace is sufficient for you to walk a different path. God in His grace has given each of us exactly what we need so we can heed Lady Wisdom and resist Lady Folly today.

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[1] <http://www.calgaryherald.com/Entertainment/Miss+California+Perez+Hilton/1522603/story.html>

[2] Observation by Allen Ross, p. 947.

[3] *Dictionary of Biblical Languages (Logos)*

[4] Derek Kidner, p. 82.

[5] She mixes her wine, perhaps with spices for taste purposes, or perhaps with water to dilute it and prevent intoxication. Solomon will have plenty to say later about the dangers of alcohol and the folly of drunkenness (Prov. 20:1; 23:20-21, 29-35).

[6] Derek Kidner, p. 82.

[7] As Allen Ross put it, "Wisdom rewards the wise, but mockery suffers alone." p. 949.

[8] *Dictionary of Biblical Languages (Logos)*

[9] David Jeremiah, *The Wisdom of God*, p. 37.

[10] Allen Ross, p. 950.

[11] Allen Ross, p. 950.

[12] Derek Kidner, p. 84.

[13]

