

Wisdom's Invitation

Printed Text: Proverbs 8:1-5, 22-31

Background Scripture: Proverbs 8, 9

Devotional Reading: Proverbs 8:10-21

Proverbs 8:1-5

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.

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. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, ³¹ rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind.

Introduction

We live in a fast-paced world. People are scurrying about in pursuit of happiness, meaning, or perhaps something they cannot even define. Amid all the clamor, the voice of wisdom is calling.

Wisdom's invitation may not seem as exciting or glamorous as what the world has to offer, but it has the infinite advantage of reflecting the basic structure of creation, and more importantly, the will of the Creator. The things that wisdom offers, therefore, will not prove illusory or harmful.

Perhaps we fail to appreciate the blessings of wisdom because we over-look its relational dimension. Ultimately, wisdom means knowing God. As believers, we need to show our children and others we come in contact with that wisdom is not a set of abstract rules or boring principles that older people come up with to annoy the young. Rather, God's wisdom points the way to abundance, a life of genuine passion and fulfillment.

God is not a skinflint (selfish person) who wants to withhold His wisdom. He overflows with grace and desires to pour out His riches upon us. May we gain from this week's lesson a sense of how pressing the world's need for wisdom is and how willing God is to provide it.

Lesson Background

Proverbs 8 uses an exciting literary technique called personification to portray wisdom. This means that wisdom is not presented as an abstract, doctrinal item that can be reduced to a list of dos and don'ts. Instead, wisdom takes a personality and becomes the companion of God in creating Heaven and earth. Wisdom is also the channel of God's blessing.

Lesson Aims

- Identify imagery the writer uses to give human qualities to wisdom.
- Tell how godly wisdom is seen in a person's actions.
- Use Scripture in a case study format to help someone make a wise decision.

The Invitation's Pervasiveness

In Proverbs, Chapter 8, the speaker is identified as "wisdom". Wisdom is defined (according to Webster's Dictionary) as having insightful understanding of what is true, right or enduring. Looking closely at the word "insightful", this is having the ability to perceive the true or hidden nature which is what wisdom does. This wisdom speaking in this passage is not authored by human wisdom. Some Bible students believe that the pre-incarnate Christ is the speaker; however, the author of Proverbs was simply personifying the attribute of wisdom.

1. What is the identity of the speaker in Proverbs 8? (vs. 1-3)

Looking at verse 1, it is clear to see wisdom has a purpose which is to relay a message. This is clear to see for she cries out and her voice is lifted up which clearly shows she has nothing to hide. She is available to everyone, seeking to persuade people to listen and embrace her principles. She does not want to see people stumble and be ruined by their errors. This is why she makes herself know everywhere by standing at the highest of heights so she can be seen and heard, at intersections (often in Scripture roads and intersections have a symbolic significance. They call to mind different paths of life or "places of decision where you can take a new direction, follow another signpost, or even get ...lost. There is where wisdom is needed most so here is where she takes her stand.) and at the gates to the city, where people went to enter or exit the town.

2. What is the significance of the places where wisdom chooses to declare her message? (vs. 2-3)

Wisdom's message is not tailored to a select few or crowd but to everyone. She demonstrates this by crying out for all to hear and making herself known in diverse places. In verse 4, she begins to speak addressing her message to all men and their children which shows no one is excluded. The message is for all to take heed.

3. How does wisdom make it clear that she is offering herself to all people? (vs. 4)

When man embraces the instruction of wisdom, he inherits mental discipline which matures him for spiritual discernment which enables man to make responsible choices. A follower of wisdom is rooted in sound teaching, rests in trust in God and receives benefits for being obedient (See Proverbs Ch. 3). It is also important to note even the wisest of God's children are subject to sin, there is necessity of God's fatherly discipline to increase wisdom and blessing (Prov. 3:11-12),

...for whom the Lord loves, He chastens. At the beginning of our lesson, I noted that wisdom represented truth. Wisdom does not seek to be popular or curry favor. The follower of wisdom loves truth so much that he despises evil. A follower of wisdom hates evil because it is the mortal enemy of all that is decent and good. We do not show much love for wisdom if we will not take the opportunity to express our revulsion toward what opposes it.

4. Why does a follower of wisdom hate evil? (vs. 5)

From the very beginning of God's creation work, wisdom has been present. The created order of God's creation reflects His wisdom. Looking at the latter part of verse 22, wisdom was already in existence before the creation of the world began. This emphasizes how crucial wisdom was as God did His work. Verse 23 indicates that wisdom's role was not incidental. God appointed wisdom to a crucial role as part of his eternal plan. Wisdom "was the organizing force behind all of creation. God's wisdom ordered the scheme of creation before it appeared."

5. What does it mean that God "possessed" [wisdom] in the beginning of his way? (vs. 22)

By stressing that wisdom is older than the actual things created, the passage makes it clear that wisdom is the organizing principle behind all of them proving that nothing in the earth nor the earth itself was in existence before she was. If we look at vs. 23-26, we can see the parallel account of the creation given in Proverbs Chapter 8 as follows: earth (vs. 23), with day one in Gen. 1:1-5; water (v. 24) with day two in Gen. 1:6-8; and land (vs. 25 & 26) with day three in Gen. 1:9-13.

6. What is the significance of the fact that wisdom is older than the creation? (vs. 24)

The speaker in Proverbs moves on to the dry land in verse 25. Nothing on earth suggests majesty and permanence like mountains, but wisdom was present even before they were put in place.

7. Why are mountains made the focus of verse 25?

As wisdom continues to show forth her pre-existence, she goes on to say in vs. 26 that she was even before the fields or "*the dust of earth*". The "*dust of the earth*" could be translated as the first particles of dust. The emphasis might be that wisdom is older than the creation or was involved in the Creation down to the smallest detail. Reference to the dust of the fields may also be a reminder that wisdom helped produce the fertile ground that man depends on to survive. In verses 27-29, Wisdom's claim that she was present before the Creation is a way of saying that she was an actual agent in Creation. This applies to the oceans, to the earth, and, as we see now, to the heavens as well. Wisdom was also present when God made the clouds of the sky. After saying this (vs. 28), she turns from the heights to the depths once more to note how God "*secured*" or strengthened, the oceans' "*fountains*." God made all the parts of creation, and He also set the boundaries for each part.

8. What is meant by "the dust of the earth" (vs. 26)?

In vs. 30, wisdom says she was beside God during His creation as a master craftsman meaning she was competent and experienced in the craft of creation. This shows that wisdom was in harmony with God's purposes. Wisdom declares that she was "by" God as one "brought up with

him", declaring herself to be the craftsman at God's side and proudly under his authority. Wisdom takes delight in the work she does for God. He returns the favor by taking delight in her. There is an important truth for us to consider here. We reflect divine wisdom when we view our work not as drudgery but as a source of great joy. There is no greater joy than doing God's work in God's way.

9. What is the significance of wisdom's "rejoicing" (vs. 30)?

The special focus of wisdom's delight is when God rejoiced over His creation (Gen. 1:31; Job 38:7), wisdom was also rejoicing, especially in the creation of mankind, who alone in the physical creation has the capacity to appreciate wisdom and truth. The forming of man was the climactic moment of Creation (Gen. 1:26-28). He was made in God's image and is capable of fellowship with Him. Unlike all other creatures, he is able to receive and exercise wisdom.

10. What is the special focus of wisdom's delight? (vs. 31)

Conclusion

Sometimes we jokingly say, "He is older than dirt!" Proverbs 8:22 points out that "wisdom" indeed is older than the creation itself. It is this eternal wisdom of God that is available for all believers who fear God and are willing to follow Him. The world recognizes those who do well in the educational process with honor rolls and dean's lists. There are, however, many who are very wise even though they may never have gone to college or obtained a degree. These are the ones who put God's wisdom and understanding into daily practice. If we depend on God's instructions for living as found in His Word, we can confidently choose the right thing, knowing that God will never lie to us or mislead us. God created us to enjoy life and live it to the full as we glorify Him. But this can happen only if we study His Word and model our lives after His patterns. The greatest example of this is found in the life of Jesus, God's Son. Studying His teachings and actions is a reliable way to godly living.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, the Creator of this Earth and all that dwell within, thank you for being an awesome wonder. You meticulously created the heavens and the earth according to Your master plan. You then created us in your image and oh how wonderfully made we are. Lord God help us to understand whole heartedly that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Help us to make the right choices and to despise that which is evil according to Thy Will. In Jesus' name, amen.

Thought to Remember

The life-changing invitation to wisdom is open to all, and its promises are sure.