

Wisdom is personified as a wealthy woman who has invited all those willing to come to her house and eat at the banquet that she has prepared. This imagery is used to illustrate the blessings available to those who seek the true wisdom that begins with a fear and reverence of the LORD, in contrast to the foolishness of believing that there are greater benefits to be found in evil deeds.

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1 Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: 2 She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table.

**“Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars”** – Wisdom is pictured as a wealthy woman who has built a house for the purpose of entertaining guests. In Jewish thinking, the number seven represented perfection, completion or sufficiency. Here, wisdom has built a house with seven pillars, implying the safety, stability and strength of a stable, fully supported structure.

**“She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled [mixed] her wine; she hath also furnished her table”** – Wisdom is pictured as setting a table for her guests full of food and wine. She has slaughtered the various animals to provide the meat. Wine was diluted with water to reduce its power to intoxicate and mixed with spices for flavor, so wisdom has mixed her wine to prepare it for serving to her guests. In addition to the meats, wisdom has furnished her table with the various breads, fruits and vegetables to provide a pleasant dining experience. The things mentioned in these two verses are meant to illustrate the blessings that wisdom provides.

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3 She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city, 4 Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, 5 Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. 6 Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.

**“She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city”** – Wisdom sends out an open invitation for “whosoever will” to come to her banquet by sending her maid servants into the streets to invite people as well as personally standing on “the highest places of the city” (rooftops, the top of towers, etc.) and proclaiming her invitation. The highest places can also refer to places of governmental or spiritual authority, implying that wisdom also extends her invitation from these public places.

**“Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither”** – The invitation is for the “simple” (those with little knowledge or are foolish) to come to her house so that they may partake in the benefits of wisdom. There they can learn so that they will no longer be simple.

**“as for him that wanteth [lacks] understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled”** – Those who lack understanding are invited feast at the table she has worked to prepare.

**“Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding”** – The foolish are those who have rejected God’s wisdom and are destined for destruction (**Prov. 13:20** “*He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed*”). Wisdom invites people to leave these foolish people and their ways by coming to wisdom to gain understanding, long life and the rest of wisdom’s benefits.

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7 He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. 8 Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.

**“He that reproveth [corrects] a scorner [mocks] getteth to himself shame [disgrace; dishonor]”** – The scorner is someone who doesn’t respect authority and mocks and criticizes those around him, particularly those with wisdom. Unlike the “simple,” who are simply without information, the mocker thinks that he is smarter than everyone else and is thus qualified to express his mocking opinion. If you were to attempt to correct him then you will only make yourself a target of his mockery.

**“and he that rebuketh [to judge or convict] a wicked man getteth himself a blot [a blemish]”** – The Hebrew word for “blot” can refer to a physical injury or to a moral stain. Becoming involved in the judgment of a wicked man could result in either a physical injury (if he seeks to harm you in revenge) or a moral stain at having to investigate his sins (**Eph. 5:12** “*For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret*”). The blot may also come from any false accusations that the wicked man may level against you.

**“Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee”** – This verse directly contrasts how a scorner and wise man respond to correction. Rebuking a scorner will not change his behavior but will only make you the object of his hatred and wrath. The implication is that it is a waste of time to rebuke scorners (perhaps synonymous with the word “fools”). Fools are mentioned throughout Proverbs and have the characteristic of thinking they are smarter than everyone else and therefore do not have to listen.

**“rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee”** – In contrast, a wise man realizes that he doesn’t know everything and appreciates it when someone corrects him so that he will be wiser in the future.

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9 Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.

**“Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser”** – Wise men realize that they do not know everything and will appreciate when they are instructed in things that they do not know. Because they are willing to accept such instruction, their wisdom will only increase. Unlike the scorner or wicked man, he is humble.

**“teach a just [lawful; righteous] man, and he will increase in learning”** – Similar to a wise man, a just or righteous man understands that he is not perfect in his righteousness and is willing to be taught how to be more righteous. Thus he will continue to learn how to be more righteous.

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10 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding.

**“The fear** [*to be afraid; to reverence*] **of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom**” – The first step toward gaining wisdom and becoming wise is learning to fear the LORD. It does not matter how much knowledge that we acquire, it will not be true wisdom if we have not learned the importance of reverencing the LORD and valuing Him above all else.

**“and the knowledge** [*discernment; perception*] **of the holy** [*the Holy One*] **is understanding** [*discernment; to understand*]” – The more we understand about God, the wiser we will be. Scientists have lots of facts that have been accumulated through years of experiments and study but if they don’t interpret these facts and formulate their theories with the understanding that the LORD is the Creator then they will never have true wisdom. They will always have distorted views of reality because their views will be based on lies.

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11 For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased.

Wisdom seems to be the one speaking here, and it promises long life, which is a benefit of God’s wisdom that has already been mentioned in Proverbs (Prov. 3:2, 16). Fearing God, which is the beginning of wisdom (v. 10), leads to obedience, which leads to being blessed by God, with the result being a longer life.

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12 If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but *if* thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear *it*.

**“If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself**” – If you have accumulated wisdom and become wise then you will be the primary one who will reap the benefits. Your friends, family and neighbors may benefit as well through their association with you, but you will benefit the most.

**“but if thou scornest** [*mock; boast*], **thou alone shalt bear it**” – Those who mock at God’s wisdom and believe they have no need of it will bear the guilt and consequences of it alone.

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13 A foolish woman *is* clamorous: *she is* simple, and knoweth nothing. 14 For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city,

**“A foolish woman**” – In contrast to wisdom personified as a woman inviting people from the streets to come and eat at her table (vs. 1-6), Solomon now personifies foolishness as woman also. This woman apparently does not fear the LORD (v. 10) and is lacking His wisdom.

**“is clamorous** [*to growl; to roar; to be boisterous or turbulent*]: **she is simple** [*naive*], **and knoweth nothing**” – This foolish woman is described with three attributes: 1) she is a verbal troublemaker; 2) she lacks wisdom; 3) she does not know as much as she thinks she does.

**“For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat** [*throne*] **in the high places of the city**” – Similar to wisdom inviting the public to eat at her table (v. 3), this foolish woman sits outside her door where she can interact with the public. One commentator pointed out that, while wisdom was working to prepare a table for her guests, this foolish woman is idly sitting at her door. A throne in the “high places” of the city implies a place of governmental or spiritual authority. Unlike wisdom, which presumably only visits the high places to extend her invitation for all to hear (v. 3), this foolish woman apparently lives there so that she can use the power and influence of the location to enhance the appeal of her own invitation.

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15 To call passengers who go right on their ways: 16 Whoso *is* simple, let him turn in hither: and as *for* him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, 17 Stolen waters are sweet, and bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant.

**“To call passengers** [*passers-by*] **who go right** [*straight; upright*] **on their ways**” – Foolishness extends her invitation, but she seems to target those who pass by that are walking uprightly according to God’s wisdom. She does not need to invite the foolish into her house because they are already there.

**“Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him**” – Foolishness mimics the invitation that wisdom makes (v. 4), competing with her for guests. The wisdom of men has an appearance of being wise but it is foolishness because it does not come from God.

**“Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant**” – Foolishness also invites guests to come and eat, but the source of the food is quite different. Wisdom invites her guests to eat of the banquet that she has worked to prepare, but foolishness only serves food that has been obtained through illicit means. Her food and water have apparently been stolen (thus needing to be eaten in secret) and she suggests that such food has an allure that makes it more desirable to eat than a legitimate banquet. She is appealing to the sinful nature of mankind which is attracted to the excitement of sin.

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18 But he knoweth not that the dead *are* there; *and that* her guests *are* in the depths of hell.

**“But he knoweth not that the dead are there**” – The simple man that hears and accepts the invitation of the foolish woman does not realize that her other guests have gone to their destruction within her house.

**“and that her guests are in the depths of hell** [*Sheol: the abode of the dead*]” – All who eat at the table of foolishness will end up in the grave prematurely. Wisdom will lengthen our life but foolishness will shorten it.