

A Tale of Two Houses

Proverbs 9

Intro: For people virtually everywhere, houses are significant symbols in our lives. They often reflect something not just of our tastes but our personalities. Sometimes they even reveal the battle waging in our souls between wisdom and foolishness which the book of Proverbs highlights. **Two houses** in my hometown had that effect on me when I was a child:

- My house...(ordered, provision, protection, responsibility, discipline)
- Abandoned house on Carrie W's property...(freedom, no responsibility, dangerous)

-> Two houses: one was seductively inviting but equaled danger; the other wasn't always inviting and sometimes constraining but equaled safety, goodness and life. That's precisely the distinction Proverbs 9 presents between the life of God-centered wisdom and the life of God-hating folly symbolized by two houses and the two strikingly different women who keep them (read 9:1 & 13-14a). According to this chapter, everything in our future hangs on which 'house' – which way of life - we choose to make our home.

Since chapter one, Solomon has used graphic images to try to convince his sons to walk in the way of wisdom because it means joy and life. Here in chapter 9 he gives his final argument for why wisdom is so good – because it's like living in a house where there is provision and protection but, even more importantly, where God is worshipped and glorified. That's where our text begins in vv. 1-10:

A. How to enter, and bring others into, the God-glorifying house of wisdom (vv. 1-10).

I don't know anyone who would say they don't want to be wise. But lest we think the door to wisdom's house is open to all without condition, these opening verses remind us that

1. Since wisdom's house is God's house, entrance to begins with his saving grace.

Several things here indicate that Wisdom's house is really a metaphor for God's house. First, consider the Temple imagery in these opening verses (read vv. 1-3). Combining the banquet and sacrificial imagery – and the 'highest places' from which godly wisdom calls out - that would have meant only one thing to an ancient Jew – the Jerusalem Temple where God's glory was found. Not only that, Wisdom's invitation in vv. 4-6 echo the voice of God we encounter elsewhere in Scripture. Listen to what she says (read 4-6). Wisdom's appeal reminds us of God's beckoning voice to eternal life in Isaiah 55, **"Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat!...Why spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me.... Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant...."**

Looking to the New Testament, Jesus picks up these 'invitation to life' images and applies them to Himself in Jn 7:37ff, **"On the last day of the feast...Jesus stood up and cried out, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his heart will flow riving of living water."'"** And in John 2 Jesus applied the Temple imagery to Himself when he spoke to the Jews of His body saying, **"Destroy this temple and in 3 days I will raise it up."** And looking forward to the New Jerusalem, John writes this in Rev. 21:22, **"And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb."**

These texts remind us that wisdom in Proverbs and the blessings its 'house' promises us are only available through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. For thousands of years people have looked for true wisdom and deep knowledge – thinking that once obtained, then the aching void inside them would be filled. One famous searcher in history was **Blaise Pascal**, the 17th century French mathematician and physicist who, among other things invented one of the first digital calculators. He used his brilliant mind to plumb the depths of science and math and philosophy in an attempt to fill the void he felt inside. After years of pursuing wisdom, here's his conclusion in his own words...(quote).

Maybe **you've** come here today looking for some aspect of wisdom. You wouldn't be here if you weren't looking for something. I hope you leave a little wiser and better equipped for life, but what you need most according to the Bible isn't just wise information it's a new, wise relationship with Jesus Christ. But the only way into that house of ultimate meaning, safety, significance, and joy is the gospel of Jesus' saving grace. And the good news of Jesus begins by admitting the bad news about us....

Vv. 7-10, next, show how

2. God-centered wisdom calls us to seek to bring others into her house.

If we're truly wise, we won't be satisfied with enjoying the blessings of Wisdom's house alone – we'll long for others to join us. We call that evangelism – sharing the good news of salvation through Jesus with those who have never heard. That may feel kind of intimidating at first. How many people are going to be receptive to hearing that they're sinners who need a Savior? But remembering that it's good news that we're sharing helps. That's why I like **Larry Moyer's** approach so much....and **Dan Jackson** from our church in GB has developed an equally welcoming approach....If we approach people less like impersonal evangelistic targets and more like those who have a unique story to tell, they'll be a lot more likely to hear what we have to say. Let's not be satisfied enjoying the blessings of wisdom's house alone. Let's be eager to invite others to join us. But Pr. 9: 7-9 reminds us to be judicious when we do that, because some will be more open than others. First, notice how

a. Instructing someone who's belligerently unteachable isn't often worth the risk.

(read v. 7-8a). A thousand years later Jesus echoed the same sentiment when He said in Mt. 7:6, **“Do not give dogs what is holy and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.”** Jesus says sometimes we'll encounter people who are vicious like wild dogs and unholy like pigs. Though we should try to share Jesus with everyone, when we realize that someone's attitude toward the gospel is deep-seated opposition, it's best to find someone else to tell.

An example from Jesus' own ministry illustrates the point. On one occasion after the Jewish Pharisees were offended and angry at something he said, he took his disciples aside and told them, **“Every plant that my Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let [such people] alone.”** Similarly, in Acts 18 we find Paul abandoning his ministry to the Jews in Corinth when they responded abusively. The Bible never tells us to continue evangelizing unresponsive people at all costs. With particularly caustic people who make it clear they don't want to hear about Christ, we are wise to move on to others who *are* open. **Two recent examples** in my own life illustrate the point...[neighbors vs. tennis partner]. And that leads into what we find next, how

b. Instructing teachable people is always worth the risk.

We've already talked about the kind of people to avoid trying to bring into wisdom's house, but what kind of person is worth taking such a risk with? According to v. 8-9, it's someone who exhibits two things: a willingness to be corrected when they're wrong, and a desire to learn and grow. Think of king **David's** story in the Old Testament. It was definitely a risk for Nathan the prophet to call David on the carpet for his murder and adultery, but David's track record likely gave Nathan confidence that his rebuke would be well received – and it was. Where does humility and teachability like that come from? Verse 10 gives us the answer (read). Again, David was a good example of that. Think about the years when he was running from King Saul – on at least two occasions he had a perfect opportunity to kill him and take the throne – which his men encouraged – and, besides, the prophet Samuel had already anointed him as the future king - and by that time Saul had become a crazed leader who was destabilizing the nation. Why not kill him? David's answer comes in I Samuel 26, **“Who can raise a hand against God's anointed and remain guiltless?”** What kept David restrained was his fear of the Lord, and someone like that is always worth taking the risk to instruct and correct him when he needs it. Does **our** fear of the Lord make it easy for our friends and family to correct us when we need it? I hope so.

But it's often even harder to be on the correcting side of the equation. Even if someone is known as humble and teachable, there's a chance they'll get defensive. So, what can help us give honest correction when we're tempted to give in to the pressures of people-pleasing and wanting to be liked? Then, too, a proper fear of God comes to our rescue. I like how **Prof. Greg Spencer** puts it...(quote). It also helps to remember that God's assignment when he calls us to be an agent of correction is faithfulness, not success. We can't determine their response, but we can be faithful as God's agent of truth and grace. And even when we think our faithfulness equals failure, God may still be at work in the heart of the other person. I thought about that a few years ago (**carwash**).... So, unless you're dealing with someone with a track record of belligerence, it's often willing to take a risk and invite them into God's house of wisdom. That may mean sharing the gospel; it may mean gently correcting a fellow Christian; whoever it is, the blessings of wisdom's house make the risk worth taking.

Finally, vv. 13-18 show

B. The danger of residing in the perilous house of Folly (vv. 13-18).

Three things mark a person who takes up residence in Folly's deadly house:

1. Idolatry (read vv. 13-14)

If for wisdom the '**highest places**' signified the Temple where God is worshipped, the '**highest places**' marking Folly's house point to the 'high places' of idolatrous worship denounced so often by the OT prophets. As one scholar puts it, "*Folly's house represents all the pagan gods and goddesses tempting Israel away from the one true God.*"

Illustr: For us here at Bible Pres paganism probably isn't our danger. But that doesn't mean idols aren't vying for our hearts. One way I try to gauge the hold they have on me is asking, "*How truly content am I? Is Jesus enough for me to have deep, abiding peace? Or do I need to acquire X first? Does so-and-so need to change first? Do I NEED that thorny situation I'm facing to be resolved my way first?*" If so, I've bought into something we could call "**the Jesus + plan**" – at the end of the day, Jesus isn't enough. I also demand X.

On the one hand, that dishonors God, but it's also foolish because the idols we run after never deliver for long. A good example is **my front lawn**...[meticulous planting...gas pipes...GRASS in fall...dying grass]. Moving, next, to vv. 14-17, we see how idolatry is fed by

2. Our sinful lusts (read vv. 14-17) Here lust is indicated by a delight in earthly pleasures that are warped – stolen bread and water - likely allusions to the stolen sexual pleasures of adultery that Solomon first warned his sons about back in chapter 5. Lust is especially dangerous because it's second nature to us. Unlike Wisdom, who has to send out her young women to implore the simple to come into her house, Folly can comfortably sit at her front door and invite the simple to enter because she knows their lust naturally draws them there. Because of that, we need to be especially vigilant.

Finally, the person who enters Folly's house is marked by

3. Ignorance (read v. 18)

As bad as Idolatry and lust are, they're not our greatest enemy. It's our ignorance to the fact that without God's gracious intervention, idolatry and lust will kill us. So, how do we stay alert, aware, and away from the house of Woman Folly?

Three things we've seen today can help us:

1. Thinking rightly about **God**

-> The more we fear Him -> the wiser we'll be & the better decisions we'll make.

2. Thinking rightly about **ourselves**

-> The more we remember our sin and weakness, the more humble we'll be & not trust ourselves.

3. Thinking rightly about **other people**

-> The more we nurture relationships of mutual discipleship, the more open to correction we'll be and others will trust us to correct them when they need it, leading us all to be more holy.

Conclusion: Remember **that old, abandoned house** I liked to play in as a kid? It doesn't exist today – it was torn down years ago. To my childishly ignorant mind, it seemed like it would be such a great place to live, but that was foolish and dangerous. Meanwhile, more than 40 years later, my parents still live in the house I grew up in. It's as strong and safe as ever – thanks to the principles for wise living they've established there.

In the coming weeks as we work through the wisdom principles in chapters 10-31, we're going to meet some wise commands we don't like – that we want to escape from so we can play with reckless abandon in a house with no accountability. Only one thing will help us in those moments – deciding **now** to say 'yes' to life in Wisdom's house. No matter how uncomfortable and constraining it sometimes feels, it's the best place to be, for it's the only house on earth that promises us full protection, true life, and glory to Christ our King.